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"SHE FOUND THE IDEA HIGHLY HUMOROUS"

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E. Œ. SOMERVILLE
AND
MARTIN ROSS
AUTHORS OF
"THE REAL CHARLOTTE," "SOME EXPERIENCES OF AN IRISH R.M.," "ALL ON THE IRISH SHORE," ETC. ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY
E. Œ. SOMERVILLE

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October 1906

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AN OUTPOST OF IRELAND

"Is it a bath on Twelfth Day? Sure no one would expect that, no more than on a Sunday!"

Twelfth Day was accordingly added to Miss Gerraghty's list of Bath Holidays—that is to say, the list allotted to Miss Gerraghty's visitors. Judging from appearances, her private list was composed of one infinite bath holiday; indeed, she has been heard in the kitchen announcing in clear tones her opinion of "them thrash of baths" to an audience whose hands and faces wore a sympathetic half-mourning. Nature, we were given to understand, had intended Miss Gerraghty to be a lady; a fate more blind to the fitness of things decreed that she should serve tables in a Galway lodging-house, a position in which higher destinies

are likely to be overlooked. Some touches of dignity remained hers by an immutable etiquette; no cap had ever found footing upon her raven fringe; a watch chain took the place of the ignoble white apron. Chiefest of all prerogatives, she was addressed as "Miss Gerraghty" by the establishment, an example so carefully set by her brother, the proprietor, as to suggest that her dowry was mingled with the funds of the management.

With these solaces she doubtless fed her inner need of refinement, even while she launched the thirteenth trump of repartee at the woman who came to sell turkeys, or broke a lance in coquetry with the coal man. Such episodes were freely audible to the sitting room by the hall—indeed, the woman with the turkeys finally thrust her flushed face and the turkey's haggard bosom round the door, in an appeal to Cæsar that made the rooftree ring. These things occur in Galway, with a simplicity that is not often met with elsewhere.

There was an afternoon when a native of the Islands of Aran penetrated to the hearth-rug of Miss Gerraghty's front sitting-room,

in the endeavour to plant upon its occupants a forequarter of mutton that smelt of fish, and was as destitute of fat as the rocks of its birthplace. Even the Aran man's assurance that it was "as sweet as sugar," could not relax by a line the contempt with which Miss Gerraghty, when summoned to judgment, surveyed the dainty and its owner. In course of the discussion, she took occasion to inform the company that she herself could only "eat ram mutton by the dint of the gravy," which bore, as it seemed, somewhat darkly upon the matter, but had the effect of deepening the complexion of the Aran man by quite two shades of maroon, as he hoisted his unattractive burden to his frieze-clad shoulder and removed himself.

Miss Gerraghty then stated that them Aran people had a way of their own and a sense of their own, like the Indians, and that a gentleman friend of hers who travelled in tea, had once been weather-bound in Aran and had had a bad stomach ever since. She then retired to the kitchen, where the narrative of the rout of the Aran Islander held, for the space of ten enjoyable minutes, an audience swelled by

the addition of the washerwoman and the baker's boy.

The incident passed, yet the phrase "a way of their own, and a sense of their own —like the Indians," hung hauntingly in the memory.

Any attempt to portray Marino Cottage would be incomplete without mention of its consort, Ocean Prospect, an affiliated establishment, spoken of in the household as "Opposite," from which, at any hour of the day or night, uncertain numbers of Miss Gerraghty's nieces crossed the road to Marino Cottage, laden, like ants, with burdens varying from a feather bed to a kettle of boiling water. A flavour of the life of the "Swiss Family Robinson" was thus imparted, Ocean Prospect filling the position of the wreck, which, as the virtuously brought up should remember, yielded fresh butter, kegs of gunpowder, and bedroom slippers with equal promptness. Miss Gerraghty's nieces occupied undefined and interchangeable positions in both households, from Bedelia, who played the piano, and on Saturdays crimped her hood of auburn hair, to Bridget Ellen, who at seven years of age

could discern a stale herring and tell the fish-woman so. Like Goldsmith, they left nothing untouched, and there was nothing that they touched that they did not adorn, with genial finger-mark or the generously strewn cinder. Their hats perched like mange-stricken parakeets in the hall, their witticisms drew forth the admiring yells of the kitchen audience from breakfast till bed time, the creaking of their boots was as the innumerable rendings of glazed calico, or the delirium of a corncrake. The Holy-days of the Roman Catholic church were observed by them with every honour, and with many varieties of evening party; and it is a matter for mingled thankfulness and regret that they observed them, for the most part, "Opposite." Assuredly Bedelia, with a clean face, playing dance music, would have been a spectacle hardly less memorable than Miss Gerraghty and her Sunday boots circling in a waltz and creaking through a quadrille, or sipping a glass of port with the delicacy befitting the noblesse. Yet with three Holy-days in one fortnight it might have proved excessive.

Miss Gerraghty rises irrepressibly into the foreground of these winter days, but

Christmas week in Galway Town remains an impression both salient and characteristic. During its wet and miry days the country people moved in a slow and voluble throng through streets and shops, indifferent to weather, and time and space, while the sleety storm roared of shipwreck above the rooftops, and the wearied young gentlemen behind the counters held their own against the old women with a philosophy perfected in the afflictions of many market days.

"Four an' tinpince!" shouts an old woman in a short scarlet petticoat and a long blue cloak, scornfully thumbing a pair of boots and slapping them down on the counter. She traduces them, minutely, to a party of friends, who, being skilled in the *rôle* expected of them, implore her not to waste her valuable time on such unworthy objects. The salesman has placed himself upon a bench, with his legs extended along it, his eyes on the ceiling, and his arms folded; his lips repeat occasionally the formula "Five shillins!" otherwise he remains as remote as the Grand Lama of Tibet.

"You're too tight with me!" laments the proprietor of a cartload of apples, in pathetic

appeal to a customer. "God knows I'm not tight!" responds the customer, with even superior pathos, "but the times is scroogin' meself!"

It is, perhaps, the leading draper who endures most. All day long the blue cloaks and the bony elbows jostle against his counters, disparaging hands subject his calicoes and his flannels to gruesome tests, his plush work-bags and scent-cases are handled uncomprehendingly and flung aside; acrid jibes are levelled at his assistants, who, to do them justice, show a practised tartness in rejoinder. Through the noise and the smell of stale turf smoke a large musical-box hammers and tinkles forth the "Washington Post."

Late in the wild darkness of the January evenings the cry "Will thu gull-a-wallia?" (*sic*) ("Are you going home?") passes from group to group in the streets. It is far on into the night before the carts with their load of sleepy and drunken people cease to stagger and clatter along the bleak roads that take them home. Beaten with snow, blinded with rain, the holiday season wears itself out in darkness, dirt, and inconvenience, after

the manner of such seasons, churches and public houses presenting the only open doors in the shuttered streets. All day the electric light hung its fervid loops of white fire up in the roof of the church of St. Nicholas, unearthly, coldly intense, suiting well the spirituality of arches and pillars, loftily interclasping through the storms of centuries. The tattered colours of the Connaught Rangers droop on either side of the chancel arch, shreds of mellow colour against the grey limestone; they say things that are moving to a Galway heart. Out where the long Sea Road follows the shore of Galway Bay, the great winds press heavily against the windows of Marino Cottage, and the little one-horse trams glide on the desolate shining road like white-backed beetles.

The year strengthened and the days lengthened over misty seas ridged with angry white. Out where the murky west held the Islands of Aran in its bosom, the sunsets came later day by day. Once, and memorably, a dishevelled and flying pageant of green and lurid pink glowed, like the torn colours in the church, beneath the darkening

roof of cloud; in its heart I saw the Aran steamer, labouring on the dark horizon of climbing waves.

. . . . .

It was February when Circumstance took me in her hand and flung me across two seas into the blue and gold weather and the purple and silver mountains of the Department of "Pyrénées Orientales;" and May had come before I was again in London, shivering in a cold rain that dropped acridly out of the dirty fog, the orphan rain of London, that knows no previousness of clouded hill, no dignity of broad-sailed mists moving up along the moor, no hereafter of clean breezes sweeping the bounteous heaven. Twenty hours later the mild yet poignant fragrance of Irish air was in the window of my railway carriage, and the smell of turf smoke came up out of the west across the stone walls of Roscommon.

Turf smoke lurked in concentrated staleness about the garb of the two priests in the opposite corner, yet it was preferable to yesterday's raw whiff of the Channel; the galloping whisper of the Daily Office in the two Breviaries revealed the accents of

Connaught, and were comfortable to an ear already soothed by drowsiness. Let others roll and stagger to foreign lands in front of the lashing fins of a screw, I was advancing on an even axle into springtime in the County of Galway; in my mind's eye I beheld the Aran steamer leisurely paddling upon a sea of satin smoothness to the unknown islands, and in my ear sang the phrase "a way of their own, and a sense of their own; like the Indians."

Two mornings later the door of my bedroom in a hotel in Eyre Square, Galway, was dealt a fateful blow by the hand of the hotel cook, at 3.30 A.M., a blow weighted by lifelong combat with loins of mutton. It was no less a person than she who placed the teapot on the breakfast table, murmuring apologetically that "Gerrls was no good to rise early, but owld ones like herself wouldn't ax to stay in bed." The sunshine of May fell upon her grey locks as she stood at the portal to watch her guest's departure, and her "God speed ye!" mingled with the bang of the swing-door as it slammed upon the dark and sleeping house.

The laburnums of Eyre Square were

fountains of gold, and the lilac was delicate and cool; a perfect stillness lay upon Galway. Passing on through the streets there was no sign of life, and the morning sunshine smote on ranks of muffled windows: here and there on the old houses the coats-of-arms of the Galway Tribes uplifted their melancholy witness to bygone greatness, but the town spoke with no living voice. Emerging at length from between blind-eyed house fronts, the docks were reached, and in the large vacant spaces of water now to be found where was once the second port of the United Kingdom, the smoke of a little steamer rose in lonely activity, with the mountains of Clare and the glitter of Galway Bay for a background.

There was some delay in departure, owing partly to a genial sympathy with the unpunctual, partly to a question of precedence among a pig family in the process of embarkation. The captain, a large clerical man in a soft felt hat, bore it with the equanimity of one who has learned in many journeys between Galway and Aran what is the full significance of the devils having entered into the swine. The boat moved out at length

into the gleaming breadth of the bay ; slowly the gray town grouped itself in its low-lying corner, the spires rose, waist-deep in roofs, and the heavy tower of St. Nicholas bore its associations of seven hundred years in the brilliant youth of the spring sunlight. The western suburbs stretched far along the bay, with slopes smoothly wooded ; white houses looked blankly out from their trim demesnes, like alienated friends gazing an unmoved farewell. Even Marino Cottage, attired in a summer wash of pink, seemed to regard us with a new and strange exclusiveness. Inexpressibly pure of plumage, the gulls rode the clear wavelets, and swooped from poise to poise with striding wing, masters of art in two elements, with cold eyes observant of the cumbrous creature that crawled on the face of the waters with smoke and foam and splashing. Thirty miles away a low, blue mound on the horizon represented those Islands of Aran described in the ancient 'Book of Rights" as "The Aras of the Sea;" the bows of the steamer swung to them, gradually the brown and ragged coasts of Connemara opened away to the north, and to the south the barren verge of the County

KILRONAN BAY

of Clare was shorn perpendicular to the sea at the thousand-foot drop of the cliffs of Moher.

The steamer plodded on at her ten miles an hour, the pig families below uttered no more than an occasional yell of fractiousness or dolour, and a party of Aran women sat and conversed under their red shawls with that unflagging zest and seemingly inexhaustible supply of material that may well be the envy of the cultured.

It was eight o'clock when the anchor was let go in Kilronan Bay, opposite the principal village of the principal island, while the changeless sunshine shone on shallow green water, on dazzling whitewashed cottages, on dark hills and valleys of grey stone. Round the steamer flocked battered punts and tarred canvas corraghs with their bows high out of the water; tanned faces, puckered by the sunlight, stared up from them, and in a storm of Irish the process of disembarking began —the phrase but feebly expresses the spectacle of a kitchen table lowered from the deck and laid on its back in a corragh, or the feat of placing an old woman sitting in the table with a gander in her lap. The

corragh has no keel, and a sneeze is rightly believed to be fatal to its equilibrium, but an Aran old woman and an Aran gander can rush in where Sir Isaac Newton might fear to tread.

A crowd waited at the pier's end, as the boats came creaking and gliding in to their feet; a crowd of large and angular people, their faces strong and inquisitive, and instantly remarkable to any one accustomed to the mild and half-bashful expression of West Galway eyes. There is about them an air of a foreign race and of an earlier century. Under circumstances less soul-stirring than the arrival of the Galway steamer, their long composed faces express their monotony of mood; their eyes are steady and far-looking, as those that from day to day measure the sweep of great horizons. Men and women alike wear "pampooties"—slippers of raw cowhide, with the hair outside—and walk with the alertness and erectness that are learned from rocky ground and the absence of stiff and high-heeled boots; the men affect short, full trousers, ending high above the ankle, so that the pampootie is freely displayed in its varieties of dun or black or

AN ARAN FISHERMAN

speckled hide. Topping the costume is a "Tam o' Shanter" cap, probably made in Birmingham. It is not a graceful dress, but the square shoulders and flat backs would dignify a worse one, and the mild and mottled pampootie loses its effeminacy with the people's singularly emphatic tread.

A hostelry of two whitewashed stories and a thatched roof faced the pier, and we went thither in search of a car, ordered some days before. The door was open, admitting a flood of sunshine to a narrow passage, on one side of which was a kitchen, on the other a sitting-room, with a wall paper of drab trellis-work starred with balls of Reckitt's blue—so it seemed, at least, to eyes blinded by the outer glare. It contained chiefly the smell of apples and sour bread proper to rooms of its class, such as in the Isles of Aran seemed impossibly conventional. Train-oil and sealskins would have shed a fitter perfume. Having invoked the household in vain, I essayed the kitchen, where an old man in shirt-sleeves was in the act of eating his breakfast. He regarded me, not without aversion, and continued to share an egg with a child of three years old who stood intent

and dirty-faced at his elbow. I waited till a precarious teaspoonful had been lowered into the wide open mouth, and made my inquiry about the car.

"They're out since five o'clock looking for the horse." Another spoonful of egg trembled in the balance, and entered the speaker's mouth, not without disaster.

I averted my eyes, and asked where the horse was usually kept.

"He does be out on the rocks." The spoon was pointed out of the window, somewhat peevishly.

Looking in the direction indicated, we saw the arid shore of the bay, where, instead of sands, grey stone in platforms and pavements met the blue and glittering tide. From the shore the country rose in haggard slopes of gray stone with rifts of green; cresting the height, one of Aran's many ruined oratories lifted a naked gable in the deep of the sky. A narrow road followed the bend of the bay, glaring white for two shelterless miles; no living thing was visible; the pursuit of the horse must be raging on the other side of the island. It continued for another hour, with what episodes of crag and crevasse can

scarcely be imagined; finally a dejected and shaggy captive was led in and was thrust into the shafts of a car.

The drive that followed is not easily forgotten. There were moments when the car seemed to open at all its joints, as if falling asunder from exhaustion; and the shafts swayed and swung like twin bowsprits, the wheels creaked ominously, and one tyre left an undulating line in the gritty dust of the road. On either side spread floors of stone, on which sat parliaments of boulders; we passed a stone platform so large and so level that the addition of three walls has made a creditable ball-alley of it. The walls are said to have been built with money given for the relief of distress in Aran; if so, relief money has often been worse spent in the West of Ireland. The road kept in touch with the coast, the car mounted to higher ground, with the shafts pointing heavenward on either side of the horse's touzled mane. Pale green fields and pale tracts of sand mitigated the tyranny of rock, as the island sloped south-eastward into the rich and wide azure of the sea. A village straggled along the shore, the chief mass of the low, white houses

clustered round a fragment of bastion and buttress that tells of the days when Cromwell's arm was long enough to grasp even Aran and build a stronghold there, what time the iron entered into the soul of Galway.

The builders of the castle had not far to seek for their cut stone. Four churches and a lofty and slender Round Tower were close at hand, a constellation in the devotional system of "Ara the Holy," the mother of many saints and many churches, and therefore peculiarly suited to the purpose of the Cromwellians. The churches were demolished, the topmost stones of the Tower were utilised, and its "Sweet bell" lost in the sand. To-day but twelve feet of the beautiful masonry remain to testify to the fervid skill of its builders.

Red-shawled women sat by the white-washed doorways of the village, red petti-coated children pattered barefoot on the hot rocks by the roadside, and behind them burned the sea's leagues of lapis lazuli; the green of the grass lands intervened suavely in the delicious jangle of colour. We were at our journey's end so far as the car was

"WHITE HOUSES CLUSTERED ROUND A FRAGMENT OF BASTION"

"THE OUTLINE OF CONNEMARA WAS STILL SHARP"

concerned; the artless islander, having extorted a payment of four shillings for a drive of two miles, retired, and we pursued our way on foot to the Lodge above the village, which was our destination.

Life at the Lodge on the hill during the ten days that followed had aspects that were wholly ideal, and aspects that were unreservedly scullion. The chief windows faced north-east, framing a splendid outlook across a plain of sea to where the Connemara mountains have pitched their tents in a jagged line, pale in the torpid heat of morning, dark at evening against some lengthening creek of sunset. When, at some ten of the clock the rooms in the lonely house had passed from gloaming to darkness, and the paraffin lamp glared smokily at the semi-grand piano and the horsehair sofa, the wild and noble outline of Connemara was still sharp, the gleam behind it still a harbourage for the daylight.

The more elementary needs of the establishment were coped with by a henchwoman from the village below, a middle-aged and taciturn widow, wearing a red-checked shawl over her broad chest, a smaller red shawl over her head, an excessively short red

homespun skirt, and pampooties. In the early hours of the summer morning her step, muffled in cowhide, traversed the house weightily ; in due time followed the entrance of the stable bucket, borne with a slow stride that showed to admiration the grey woollen ankles under the short skirt : her eye rested askance, and not without saturnine humour, upon the weakling of a later civilisation who still lay in bed. As the bucket was set down a deep and serious voice uttered the monosyllable "bath," as colourlessly as the bleat of a sheep, and, with the exit of her sallow face and dreamy blue eyes, the strange, arduous, trifling day began.

Breakfast was not its least achievement, prepared by our own hands at a turf fire that added an aroma of its own to the coffee, and delicately flavoured the hot milk. Owing to a scarcity of saucepans the eggs must be boiled in a portly iron pot and fished from its depths with the tongs, and through all, and impeding all, went the flushed pertinacity of the amateur toast-maker. Dinner was a more serious affair, a strenuous triumph of mind over matter and over the Widow Holloran, a daily despair, by reason of potatoes whose

hearts remained harder than Pharaoh's, and chiefly by reason of the dearth of pie-dishes.

"Why wouldn't ye ax Miss O'Regan down in the town for the loan of a pie-dish? Sure she's full up of pie-dishes." This remarkable information came from Mrs. Holloran, but was not acted upon.

After twenty four hours of the ministry of the Widow Holloran, we found the conclusion forced upon us that the Simple Life was far more complicated, and infinitely more exacting than the normal existence of the worldling. To us, nurturing a sulky flame in a gloomy pile of turf, the truly Simple Life resolved itself into two words: good servants. Even the least of Miss Gerraghty's nieces would have been a Godsend; the thought of mutton chops, procurable at any instant, all but brought a dimness to the eye that foresaw a dinner—the third in succession—of American bacon and eggs that tasted of fish. It was in one of the long May twilights that we were waited upon by the man who had, on the hearthrug of Marino Cottage's Front Sitting-room, offered us mutton, sweet as sugar. This time he offered not mutton, but sheep; he produced a sort of subscription

list, and invited us to put down our names for any piece we might prefer of an animal which was at the moment nibbling the dainty grass among the boulders. We subscribed, with a shudder which was, as it proved, superfluous. The subscription list did not fill, and two days afterwards we were told that the matter had fallen through, and if we wanted "buttcher's mate" we must telegraph to Galway.

I have heard, in another part of Ireland, described slightingly as "a wild westhern place in Cork," of a somewhat similar, but more elaborate process. "When they goes to kill a cow there, they dhrive her out through the sthreet, and a man in front of her ringing a bell, and another man with her, and he having a bit o' chalk (and it *should* be a black cow). Every one then can tell what bit of her they want, and the man dhraws it out on her with the chalk. But it *should* be a black cow." I think it was a relative of this butcher who, when remonstrated with about his meat, on the ground that it had not been properly killed, replied unanswerably, "I declare to ye, the one that had the killing of that cow was the Lord Almighty."

Meals at the Lodge were not things done in a corner. Sheep cropped the grass to the edge of the window sill, village children loitered observantly on their way to the well, tall brindled dogs, in whom must lurk some strain of the old Irish wolfhound, gnawed sapless bones in the porch, as in an accustomed sanctuary. The cuckoo, that pretended recluse, passed and repassed in clumsy flight, even perching on the roof of the house, and sending a hoarse and hollow cry down the chimney. Sitting on the rock ledges in the long morning, the chiefest concern of idleness was to note his short and graceless flittings from boulder to wall, his tactless call, coarsened by nearness and the lack of illusion. Not thus does the spirit voice poise the twin notes in tireless mystery, among the wooded shores of Connemara lakes.

Below the Lodge, to the south-east, the restless sand has smothered many a landmark, obliterated many a grave. Lie down in it, it is a soft bed ; let it slip through your fingers, dry and fine and delicate, while the sea line is high and blue above you, and the light breaker strikes the slow moments in

rhythm. Saint and oratory, cloghaun and cromlech, lie deep in its oblivion, their memory living faintly and more faintly from lip to lip through the years; around the saints their halos still linger, pale in this age's noonday, and the fishermen still strike sail at the corner of the island to the little crumbling tower that is supposed to mark the grave of Saint Gregory.

The ridge of the island runs in table lands of rock, dropping in cliffs to the sea along its south-western face. These heights are level deserts of stone, streaked with soft grass where the yellow vetch blazes and a myriad wild roses lay their petals against the boulders. Yet even these handmaids of the rock are not the tenderest of its surprises. Look down the slits and fissures as you step across them on a May day, and you will see fronds of maiden hair climbing out of the darkness and warm mud below. A month later they will be strong and tall above the surface; the clots of foam may often strike them when, below their platform, the piled-up Atlantic rolls its vastness to the attack, with the cruel green of the up-drawn wave, with the hurl of the pent tons against crag

and cliff. But for us, on that May morning, land and sea lay in rapt accord, and the breast of the brimming tide was laid to the breast of the cliff, with a low and broken voice of joy.

The walk here became finally and definitely a steeplechase, and those not bred in Galway had better think twice before attempting an Aran stone wall; indeed, when five feet of ponderous and trembling stone lattice work has to be dealt with, the native himself will probably adopt the simple course of throwing it down, building it up again or not, according to the dictates of conscience. If the explorer survives two hours of this exercise, he will have reached the fort of Dun Ængus, built in days when Christianity, a climbing sunrise, was as yet far below the Irish horizon. Of its kind, it is reputed to be as perfect as anything in Europe, but it is an unlovely kind. Three invertebrate walls of loose stones, eighteen feet high and fifteen feet thick, sprawl in a triple horseshoe to the edge of a cliff, which, with its sheer drop of three hundred feet to the sea, completes the line of defence. The innermost of the three ramparts encloses a windy plateau

where, in times of siege, the Firbolg Prince Ængus, son of Huamor, probably enjoyed the society of all the cattle in the island, and of an indefinite number of wives. The outermost rampart girdles eleven acres of rocky hillside, and here the unwearied savage labour constructed a chevaux-de-frise by wedging slabs and splinters of stone into every crevice. Hardly now, in the intelligent calm of sight-seeing, can the invader make a way through the ankle-breaking confusion, where, in the gloaming centuries before St. Patrick, bloody hands clutched the limestone edges in the death stagger, and matted heads crashed dizzily down, in unrecorded death and courage and despair.

After those days Danes and Irish and English plundered in their turn, but the stillness of the rock and the loneliness of the sea closed in again on the islands, while on the mainland rebellion and conquest alternated in a various agony, and the civilisation thrust on Ireland was a coat of many colours, dipped in blood. These Aras of the Sea rest in their primitive calm, nurturing a strong, leisurely people, with the patience and hardiness of the rock in their blood; equipped

physically for any destiny, equipped mentally with the quick financial ability and shrewdness of the Irish, yet slow to imitate, slow in the adoption of what others initiate, regarding, I fear, their country as the invalid and ill-used wife of the British ogre, a wife of the admired Early Victorian type, unoriginative, prolific, and unable to support herself.

Looking down from Dun Ængus there is little expression of the three thousand lives that are hemmed in this floating parish. No wheel is audible along the nine miles of Irish moor; the other two islands lie gray and still, rimmed by fawning and flashing tides, lifeless save where the smoke of burning kelp creeps blue by the water's edge.

It is a pleasant descent to the village of Kilmurvey, down through the buoyant air of the hill side; the grass steals its way among the outposts of rock, till the foot travels with unfamiliar ease in level fields. Near Kilmurvey the Resident Magistrate's house shows a trim roof among young larch and spruce, a miracle of modernity and right angles after the strewn monstrosities of the ridge above; passing near it, a piano gave

forth a Nocturne of Chopin's to the solitude, a patrician lament, a skilled passion, in a land where ear and voice have preserved the single threads of melody, and harmony is as yet unwoven.

With its barbaric novelties of colour, its wild, red-clad women, its background of grey rock, its glare of sunshine, Aran should be a place known to painters, but at the first sight of of even the sketch book the village street becomes a desert ; the mothers, spitting to avert the "bad eye," snatch their children into their houses, and bang their doors. The old women vanish from the door steps, the boys take to the rocks. As it is the creed of Aran that any one that has his "likeness dhrew out" will die within the year, it seems unfeeling to urge the matter upon them. Here and there the mission shilling makes its convert ; an old woman braced herself to the risk on the excellent ground that she would probably die before the year was out, and might as well make the most of her chances. She found the idea highly humorous, and so did several of the neighbours.

Our departure from Aran was not out of

keeping with the general run of events there. Struggling with painting materials, plants of maidenhair fern, and the usual oversights and overflows of packing, scantily enveloped in newspaper, we made our way on foot from the Lodge to the bay below it, a distance of some two or three hundred yards, and there embarked, attended to the boat by Mrs. Holloran and her next of kin—in other words, a crowd of some twenty deeply interested persons. We had shoved off and were moving out towards the steamer over the transparent green deeps of the bay, when I remembered the little boy who had driven our portmanteaux down to the beach in a donkey cart, and I flung a shilling to one of the next-of-kin in settlement of the obligation. We saw the emissary present the tribute.

"He'll not take it!" was shouted from the shore.

I protested at the full pitch of my voice to the effect that he must not allow his magnanimity to interfere with his just dues, that I was very glad to give it to him.

"He'll take three!" travelled to us like a cannon ball across the translucent water.

Nothing travelled back. Nothing, that is, except the Galway steamer, which presently flapped its paddles into the falling tide, and took us away to regions where we ourselves were natives, and viewed the tourist with a proper hauteur.

Meditating on those May days, winnowed now of their husk of culinary difficulties, they seem the most purely lonely, the most crowded with impressions, that could befall. Habituated to the stillness of West Galway life, these stillnesses were vast and expressive beyond any previous experience of mine ; in the shadeless brilliance, the bare grayness, I breathed a foreign and tingling air. The people's profoundly self-centred existence has " no thoroughfare " written across it ; lying on the warm rocks, they see Ireland stretched silent, enigmatic, apart from them, and are content that it is so. Their poverty is known to many, their way of thought to a few ; they remain motionless on the edge of Europe, with the dust of the saints beneath their feet.

PICNICS

PICNICS

A KETTLE seated decorously on a kitchen range is far less likely to be smoked than one propped precariously on a heap of smouldering sticks. It is also ordained by the forces of civilisation that it shall eventually boil; a point by no means to be taken for granted in the matter of the sticks. A sparcity of saucers, an apostolic community of teaspoons; no one would suspect the hidden humour in such disabilities if confronted with them at an ordinary "At Home," and however excellent the appetite brought to bear upon a chicken pie at a luncheon party, in the lack of knives and forks it would scarce nerve its possessor to eat with his fingers. And yet, so skin deep a fraud is civilisation, the chicken bone to which, through the years, I look back most fondly, was gnawed, warm

from the pocket, on the top of one of the Bantry mountains.

The first picnic in which I clearly recall taking part was, like many that succeeded it, illicit. It unconsciously adhered to the great and golden precept that picnics should be limited in number and select in company. It consisted, in fact, of no more than four, which, with a leggy deerhound, a turf fire, and the smoke from the turf fire, were as much as could be fitted in. Why a ruinous lime-kiln should have been chosen is not worth inquiring into. It probably conformed best with those ideals of cave-dwelling, secrecy, and rigorous discomfort that are treasured by the young. We were, indeed, excessively young, and should have been walking in all godliness with the governess ; two of us at least should. The other two were turf-boys, who should have been carrying baskets of turf on their backs into the kitchen, and submitting themselves reverently to the innumerable oppressions of the cook, who, they assured us, had already pitched them to the Seventeen Divils three times that same day. The lime-kiln was sketchily roofed with branches, thatched with sedge and was entered by the hole at

"THE ELDER TURF-BOY"

which the smoke came out. It was a feat of some skill to lower oneself through this hole, avoid the fire, grope for the table—a packing-case—with one toe, and thence fall on top of the rest of the party. Except in the item of sociability I do not think that the deerhound can have enjoyed himself much; he spent most of the time in dodging the transits of the kettle, and it was our malign custom to wipe the knives on his back, in places just beyond the flaps of a tongue as long and red as a slice of ham. What we ate is best forgotten. Something disgusting with carraway seeds in it, kneaded by our own filthy hands, lubricated with lard, and baked in a frying pan in the inmost heart of the turf smoke. The drink was claret, stolen from the dining-room, and boiled with a few handfuls of the snow that lay sparsely under the fir trees round the lime-kiln. Why the claret should have been boiled with snow is hard to explain. I think it must have been due to its suggestion of Polar expeditions and Roman Feasts; subjects both of them, that lent themselves to learned and condescending explanation to the turf-boys. Afterwards, when the elder turf-boy, Sonny Walsh, produced a

pack of cards from a cavity in his coat that had begun life as a pocket, and dealt them out for "Spoilt Five" it was the turf-boy's turn to condescend. "Spoilt Five" is not in any sense child's play; its rules are complicated, and its play overlaid with weird usages and expressions. For the uninitiated it was out of the question to distinguish kings from queens, or the all-important "Five-Fingers" from any other five, through the haze of dirt with which all were befogged. The turf-boys knew them as the shepherd knows his flock, and at the end of the game had become possessors of our stock-in-trade, consisting of a Manx halfpenny, a slate pencil with plaid paper gummed round its shank, two lemon drops, and a livery button.

This was a good and thoroughly enjoyable picnic, containing within itself all the elements of success, difficult as these may be to define, and still more difficult as they are to secure.

I remember an August afternoon, and a long island that lay sweltering in a sea of flat and streaky blue. Two heated boatloads approached it at full speed, each determined to get there first, and equally determined not

AN AUGUST AFTERNOON

to seem aware of any emulation. Simultaneously the keels drove like ploughs into the hot shingle, the inevitable troop of dogs flung themselves ashore—it is noteworthy that all dogs dash into a boat as if they were leading a forlorn hope, and leave it as if they were escaping from a fire—the party spread itself over the beach in cheerful argument as to the most suitable place for the repast, and while the contention was still hot as to the relative merits of a long disused churchyard, with an ancient stone coffin lid for a table, or a baking corner of the strand, where a thin stream trickled over the cliffs to the sea, one came from the boats with a stricken face, and said that all the food had been left behind. There was silence for a space. Then, while the accusers answered one another, the remembrance of Mrs. Driscoll's cottage shone like a star on a stormy night into the minds of the castaways. Under happier circumstances the metaphor might have seemed inappropriate, but there is a time for everything, and the time for Mrs. Driscoll's cottage to pose as a star of hope and deliverance had arrived. Mrs. Driscoll herself, emerging from her cowhouse,

sympathetic, hospitable, and very dirty, was equal to the occasion. Would she lend us a skillet? Sure, why not! An' eggs is it? an' praties? an' a sup o' milk, and the sign o' butther? Well, well! the cratures! An' they come to this lonesome place to ate their dinner, an' to lave it afther them afther! Glory be to mercy! Well, the genthry is quare, but for all they're very good! She led the foraging party in to her cottage. It was the only house on the island, and, in rough weather, as solitary and cut off from humanity as was Noah's Ark. Indeed, solitariness was not the only point wherein a resemblance to the Ark was suggested. A cloud of hens screeched forth over the half door in our faces; two cats and a pig sped out as we opened it; a small but determined mother goat dared us to force the fortalice of the inner chamber in which her offspring were, no doubt, in laager; a gander lifted his clattering bill from a skillet—the skillet, I may say, in which our subsequent meal was to be prepared—to hiss alarmingly at us; two children and, I think, a calf, shuddered noiselessly out of sight into the brown vault of the fireplace, and through it all, as Mrs.

Browning sings, "The nightingales" (or, strictly speaking, the ducks) "drove straight and full their long clear call."

Mrs. Driscoll drove, headlong as an ocean steamer, through her *ménage*. The skillet was snatched from the gander; with one sweeping cuff a low-growling, elderly dog was dashed from its seat on the potato sack under the table. The dresser yielded a bowl full of eggs; from the bedroom came milk and butter (happily, none of us, save the goat, was made free of the mysteries of their place of keeping), and a little girl was plucked from the depths of the chimney and commanded to "run away to the well for a pitcher of water."

"Not from the well in the bohireen," we said quickly, "it doesn't look very—"

"Sure that's grand wather, asthore," replied Mrs. Driscoll, "if ye'll take the green top off it there's no better wather in the globe of Ireland, nor in Carbery naythe r!"

We accepted the reassurance. When one is less than twenty and more than half-starved, one accepts a good deal, and I cannot remember that any of us were any the worse for the water. At all events the potatoes

were boiled in it, the eggs nestling amicably among them (this to save time and fuel). Ultimately there was made a comprehensive blend of everything—eggs, potatoes, milk and butter, the whole served hot, on flat stones, and eaten with pocket knives and cockle-shells.

Over our heads the unsophisticated sea-gulls swooped and screamed—I remember that one of them nearly knocked my hat off on that island one day—the air quivered like hot oil between us and the purple distance of the mainland, and yet there was the island freshness in it ; we lay on our backs on the heathery verge of the cliffs and drowsed off the potatoes. There were no plates to wash, no forks to clean. It was an admirable picnic. So every one thought, save the dogs, who found egg-shells and potato-skins a poor substitute for chicken bones.

There is, I think, in the matter of picnics no middle course endurable. If they cannot attain to the untrammelled simplicity of the savage, they require all the resources of civilisation to justify them. Let there be men-servants, and maid-servants, and cattle —for carting purposes—and, in fact, all the

things enumerated in the Tenth Commandment, including your neighbour's wife. Let there also be champagne—and yet, not even champagne will alleviate much if your neighbour's wife be dull and greedy, and how often, how almost invariably is she, at a picnic, both these things! There certainly is something in the conditions of set feasts out of doors that induces an unusual measure of gluttony. Primarily, of course, there is the lack of other occupation, but chiefly, I think, there is the instinctive wish to lessen the labours of packing up. Packing up is the dark feature of the best picnic. I have often pitied the Apostles for the seven basketfuls that they found left on their hands.

If an instance of all that is worst in a picnic be required I may lightly record some of the features of an entertainment which, one summer, I was by Heaven's help and a little lower diplomacy, enabled to evade. The drag-net of the African war had gone heavily over the neighbourhood, and to the forty women who had unflinchingly accepted, but two men were found to preserve the just balance of the sexes. These numbers are

not fictitious. They may be found seared upon the heart of the hostess.

The forty, with a singular fatuity, seem to have been as tenacious of their dignity as jurymen at a Coroner's inquest. It was theirs, as females, to sit still and be fed, and this they did, even though the feeding process was conducted solely by the two heroes of the afternoon, and was necessarily of the most gradual character. The kettle, or rather kettles, were—it is the only bright spot in the affair—ably manipulated by serfs in the background, and in their hands was also the grosser conduct of the feast, the unpacking, the setting forth on the grass of a table cloth of about half an acre in area, and the placing on its unattainable central plateaux those matters—such as cream-jugs and fruit salads—in greatest request and most prone to disaster. They, also, had been the selectors of a ruined cottage as the site of the camp fires, and it was only when these were being prepared that a swarm of bees discovered itself in the chimney. Fortunately, however, before it went on to discover the picnic, some one, with the Irish gift of using the wrong thing in the right place,

stopped the flue with a hamper and a carriage rug, thus heading off the worst of the bees, while the fires were relit in the corners of the cottage. The two men faced the position. Through smoke and bees they did their duty, carting back and forth the eighty cups of tea which the occasion demanded; but they said afterwards that more than patriotism barbed the regret that their country had deemed them too old for active service. As for the forty ladies, they sat and fulfilled what was for them the primary, if not the only object of the picnic, by eating and drinking, without haste, without rest, till the kettles gave out. Then, like a flock of gorged birds, they rose heavily, and unaffectedly begged to be allowed to order their carriages, and so went home. The hostess had held a walk and a view in reserve, in case of emergencies, but it was not for her to complain. The two men then had their tea.

It has been my fate to take part in several yachting picnics. They have all had one common and hideous feature—even as a cocked-nose or a squint will run in families—the yachts have invariably been becalmed.

Their other conditions have been various. Sometimes the food was sent by land to meet the yachters at the chosen rendezvous; sometimes the picnicking contingent rode bicycles and sent the food by sea, and sometimes the yacht alone took the whole outfit, food and feeders, and putting forth to sea, incontinently fell upon flat calms, and the slow pulsing swell of the Atlantic, and thus, though the direct cause varied, the net result was ever the same—starvation. There is hidden away in West Cork a most lovely and lonely lake. It is joined with the sea by a narrow neck, up which at high water boats can come. To landward is a great hill, thickly grown with firs, and aboriginal oaks, and hollies, wherein on a still night you may hear the wild screech of the martin-cats, ripping the darkness blood-curdlingly, like a woman's scream. From its summit is a view of wondrous beauty and expanse (not necessarily synonymous terms, though often reckoned so), and it was there that we were to picnic, bicycling as near the top as might be, while hirelings from the yacht were to carry provisions up the hill for us. It was a luncheon picnic, the blackest

kind of all. The yacht started at day-break; all was to be ready on the hill top by our arrival.

I should think the least intelligent would have already gathered the *dénouement* of this "Cautionary Tale," as Mrs. Sherwood would call it, and I need do no more than indicate the closing scene of the day's tragedy. On a sea of turquoise, far-away sails, saffron-coloured, and motionless in the afternoon sunlight. On the mud floor of a roadside public house, a small company of bicyclists, drearily preserving life by means of sour porter, flat, sweet lemonade, and probably the stalest biscuits in the wide province of Munster.

Many high authorities, including, I am told, Mr. Herbert Spencer, assure us that it is the inherited influences of prehistoric ancestors that breed in otherwise decent and home-keeping souls the love of the lawless freedom of a picnic, and, to be sure, the pleasure that we had in our island orgy, with its plateless, spoonless indecorums, can best be explained on some such theory. None the less, I maintain that the ideal picnic is only achieved by the most super-civilised

elimination and selection. Two, or at most four, congenial souls, and a tea basket of latest device and most expert equipment—these things, and thoroughly dry grass, and I ask no more of heaven.

BOON COMPANIONS

BOON COMPANIONS

"D'ye remember of Gill and Poor Fellow, greyhounds that was in it long ago?"

I did not. In the long and tear-stained annals of the family dogs but one greyhound was in my memory, the saintly and beautiful Gazelle, own niece to "Master McGrath," as was recited with bated breath to new governesses and other of the unenlightened, coupled with large statements as to her uncomputable value had not her tail in youth been shut into a stable door and given a double angle like a bayonet.

Rickeen was occupied, to some extent, in felling a young ash tree. He swung in half a score of blows that made it shiver, and presently came to the expected pause.

"Faith thim was the dogs—! My brother Tom was butler here the same time.

B'leeve me 'twas himself was souple! He'd run home any minute in the day, two miles, and ye wouldn't hardly feel him gone."

This remarkable accomplishment on the part of the butler was allowed to sink in, as it deserved.

"He had a tarrier, and one day going through the Wood of Annagh himself and the tarrier wakened a hare, and the two o' thim was hunting her through and fro, and he cursing the full of a house on the tarrier. He shtud then on the big rock that's in it, and he let a whistle on his two fingers. The two greyhounds was sthretched within at the kitchen fire up at the Big House, and sorra word of lie I'm tellin', but Poor Fellow put an ear on him, and the two of them legged it out of the kitchen and away with them to the wood, and they never stopped nor stayed till they found Tom, and themselves and the tarrier killed the hare."

The big rock and the Big House were severed by an Irish mile of tree trunks and briars, but criticism is the last thing required from a listener, and I hope I played my part.

Rickeen was again possessed by a spasm

RICKEEN

of industry : the chips flew out, the tall young ash cracked, and sank into the arms of its neighbours. There was a singular simplicity about the forestry of the establishment. When the bitter cry of the cook went forth for wood wherewith to cook the impending meal, Rickeen prayed that the divil might roast and baste all the women in Ireland, and cut down a convenient young tree. By this means the plantations were lightly thinned at the ends nearest the house, and as a general thing the cook gave notice every three weeks, which prevented any unwholesome stagnation.

"But as for dogs," continued Rickeen, a little later, as he snicked off the greeny-grey branches, "the grandest dog ever was in this counthry was Mullowny's. Ye couldn't know what kind of a breed was in him, but ye'd *have* to like him, he was that spotted."

Here a long-drawn yell came forth from the yard, resolving itself gradually into a statement to Rickeen that the Misthress wanted her keys, and himself was the last one she seen them with.

Rickeen put down his hatchet in fateful silence. His dog, couched in a brake where

the young bracken stems curled like bishops' croziers round her crafty snout, raised one yellow eyebrow out of what was apparently deep sleep, arose, and followed him with her wonted gravity. Her cold manner was the next thing to good breeding; in spite of a family tree exclusively composed of crosses, in spite of a coat suggestive of a badger skin that has been used as a door mat, there was that in her pale eyes and in the set smile at the corners of her mouth that discouraged familiarity, and induced other dogs to feign a sudden interest in their own affairs as she approached. To follow Rickeen she gnawed ropes, and swam lakes, and ate her way through doors, and Rickeen never to my knowledge addressed her, except with the command to drive in the cows. In her next incarnation she will probably be the ideal colonist's wife.

I remained sitting on a stump in the silence, and thought of my first love, Bran. Through the tree stems I could see a grassy hill sloping to the lake side, where, at the age of nine, I grovelled one morning among the cowslips and mopped my soaking tears with my holland waggoner, and wished

for death, because Bran had been drowned. Bran was a cur, half silky and gracious Gordon setter, half woolly vulgarian of the Irish cottage breed, and to us, his comrades, a hero, an object of passionate faith, and, as such, the victim of many well-meant but excruciating honours. He wore, with docile consciousness of his absurdity, ornamental harness of strangling complications, and with it drew at a foot pace a grocer's box, mounted on wheels, while we walked before and after with fixed bayonets and all the gravity befitting a guard of honour operating in shrubberies teeming with banditti. It was not till an attempt was made to put the new bull dog into double harness with him that Bran showed symptoms of resentment, and the battle that then raged in the tangle of the shoulder straps and traces placed him, if possible, higher in our respect. The matter was patched up with the bull dog, who, though instant in quarrel, was not without good feeling, and next morning, at an early hour, I saw his frightful face protruding from under the bedclothes of my brother's bed, framed in a poke bonnet of sheet, while two long tails, languidly waving

in welcome, hung down over the valance like bell-ropes, and witnessed to the presence of Bran and of the young deerhound, Kilfane, hidden in the deepest heart of the bed.

Perhaps Sunday was the day that Bran was most satiating to us. To go to church on the top of the family omnibus was at any time the summit of ambition; with Bran speeding easily in front, or slackening for a hurried exchange of ferocities with cabin acquaintances, the five miles (invariably driven in the teeth of a north-westerly wind) were all too short. Those inside, whose turn it would be to sit on top coming home, yearned with crooked necks through the side windows, and stimulated by glimpses of the hero, were enabled to struggle successfully with the hideous tendency of childhood to be sea-sick in covered vehicles. During church time Bran was immured in the lock-up at the police station, and many a wriggling half-hour's endurance of the sermon was gilded by expectancy of the moment when the sorrowful sighing of the prisoner would turn to ardent sniffing under the door of the lock-up, and the hand of the sergeant would restore to us "life's greatest possibility."

One summer night, at about this time, as I lay in my bed, the spirits of prophecy and of poesy came upon me hand in hand, quite inexplicably. Bran was in his usual health, and, as I afterwards found, was at that very hour engaged in stealing mutton hash from the back hall: but it was decreed that I should compose an ode fatefully commemorating his violent death.

"Oh, Bran, thou wert gentle and sweet," I began, without an effort, while Mattei's Valse swung and crashed its way up through two ceilings from the drawing-room,

> But now thou art past and gone,
> Like a wave on the ocean so fleet,
> And the deed of death was done.

Even here inspiration did not flag.

> 'Tis no use to wail or to weep.
> For oh, alas and alack!
> Thou'st gone to that eternal sleep,
> From which none can bring thee back.

The magnificence of the close was almost stupefying to the author; even the second line of the verse had seemed full of a rending passion. I sank to sleep, aware that I had taken my place in literature.

A year afterwards came the miserable

tears among the cowslips, the first taste of the bitter core of sentiment, and the discovery that the prophetic ode did not express the position.

Bran occupies the whole foreground of the history of pets, but there were many of a lesser sort. There was even another elegy, beginning:

> Stranger, with reverence draw near,
> A Linnet lies below.

But birds were not our foible.

Rabbits followed each other in bewildering succession, and travelled to their doom by the same track. We fed them with milk and water out of eggspoons, with daisies, and with clover, but the morning always came when the foundling lay stiff in its hay, its black eyes glazed, and the limp daisies untouched beside it. One notable exception is recorded, a young rabbit brought in with a broken leg, who out of pure contrariety and improbability lived for a year. It became precocious beyond belief, and sat all day observing life from the arm of its proprietor. At night it slept, or affected to sleep, in a box in her room, biding its time till the candle was put out. Under cover of darkness it

would then stealthily come forth and would buck with precision from the floor on to the face of the sleeper, repeating the feat as often as repulsed, until a burrow in some corner of the bed was granted. (It is not out of place here to mention that its nails were cut with extreme care and regularity.) Its diet presented no difficulty, save in the matter of restriction. It partook of the family meals as they came : porridge, marmalade, bread and butter, meat ; uncooked green vegetables were not so much as mentioned in its presence. It even, horrible to confess, frequently ate rabbit-pie, and cracked and crunched the bones of its relatives with cannibal glee. On these scandalous foods it throve, but remained dwarfish and uncanny. It had moods of suspicion and brooding, when it sat in the chimney of an empty room. Once, under the protection, no doubt, of the evil spirits with whom it was in league, it leaped from a window sill forty feet above the ground, alighted with a flop, and greeted those who rushed to pick up the corpse with a cold stare of inquiry as to what the excitement was about. It met its death by presuming in the open field upon the

long-suffering of the dogs whom it terrorised in the house.

Outside the inner circle of pets, and within the outer circle of the donkeys whom we partly loved, partly scorned, and daily martyrised, kids held a certain position of their own. They are not to be commended, being skittish, peevish, tactless and strong, but they were not without attraction. One of them, black and white, with oblique barley-sugar eyes, showed much inclination towards the profession of house dog, and learned many essentials of that trade ; the doors that were worth waiting at, the perils and rich prizes of the kitchen passages, the moment to intrude, the moment to fly. An incident of its career can best be told in the words of a certain Bridget, a notable member of the long dynasty of Bridgets that passed processionally through the establishment *en route* for America.

"The Misthress was below in the hall and she heard one above on the top landin', walkin' as sthrong as a man. 'Bridget!' says she," (the voice of command was given with great elegance and hauteur), "and what was in it but the young goat, and it commenced

walkin' down the stairs. 'Come here, Bridget!' says the Misthress, and sure of course the goat said nothing, but goin' on always from step to step. 'Arrah musha! The divil go from ye,' says the Misthress, 'why don't ye spake? What sort of hoppin' is it ye have up there?'" (The elegance of the imitation here yielded to the narrator's sense of what was fitting.) "Faith, the goat stood then, like it'd be afraid. 'The Lord save us, it's the fairies!' says the Misthress, an' there wasn't one in the house but she called, and what did they get in it but the goat, an' it having a stocking half ate!"

Not long afterwards (next day probably) the kid was sent back on an outside car to its native place, a region of bog and rock and scrub, where its lamentations for the schoolroom fire had ample scope. It was escorted to its Siberia by a large party from the schoolroom, filled with curiosity to see how it would be received in its family circle. The boy who was left to hold the horse became also impelled to see the meeting, with the result that the horse and car were found a little later on their backs in a bog ditch,

which conclusion is not to this hour known to the authoritïes.

It was in the winter that the Reign of Terror of the Monkeys began. The first of them, large and grey, wearing the name of Lizzie, and a red flannel coat, arrived in December, and it was humanely arranged that she should live close to the kitchen fire on the flour bin. It was also enacted that she was to be chained to the wall "until she got to know people a little."

There are Northern stories, Eastern ones, too, I believe, of houses in which evil spirits having once gained entrance, remained in immutable possession. Thus it was with us. In a short time Lizzie got to know every one very thoroughly. She bit each visitor indiscriminately, and having analysed the samples, she arranged a sliding scale of likes and dislikes, on the negative principle. That is to say, she would tolerate A till B arrived, when she bit A. On C's appearance she bit both A and B, and so on up to Z. The master of the house was Z. (Herein she showed her infernal cunning.) Z was never bitten. The kitchenmaid, in whose control were the dainties that Lizzie's soul loved, was

Y, *i.e.*, she was only bitten on the arrival of the master. Lizzie's bad life had the sole merit of brevity. One of her customs was to strike a match, and having burnt the hair on her grimy, nervous little arm, to eat the frizzled remains. (Thus invalidating the vaunt that man is the only animal that cooks.) Having on several occasions nearly set the house on fire, matches were forbidden to her, but one fortunate day a new boxful somehow fell into her possession, and, varying her wonted practice, she ate off the heads of most of the matches. Therewith her spirit passed ; but only temporarily. In less than a year she was with us again. This time in the guise of a small brown monkey, that went by the name of Jack. A clear proof of obsession by the spirit of Lizzie was afforded in the fact that precisely the same sliding scale of hatred was observed, culminating as before in the master of the house. Jack was in some particulars less repellent than his predecessor. He was smaller, and was given to fits, which gave a hope that his life might not long be spared. By this time the flour-bin from long camping would have supplied the germs of enteric to an entire army corps. (I hasten to say that, being

in Ireland, it was never used as a flour-bin having been thus temporarily styled as a concession to convention during the brief reign of an English cook who had long before fled to her native land.) Between the flour-bin and the wall Jack's fits usually took place, and it was the wont of the tender-hearted kitchenmaid (known to this day among her fellows as "Mary-the-Monkey." The suffix "the Monkey" being a distinguishing mark; as "Philippe-le-Bel," "Robert-the-Lion") to unchain him after one of these seizures and to sit before the fire with him on her lap. No experience seemed to teach her that his first act on recovery was to bite her suddenly and then escape. The alarm was spread in precisely the same manner on each successive occasion. First a shrill and piercing scream from "Mary-the-Monkey," usually coupled with an appeal to her God. Then an answering yell from the next victim in the pantry. Then a shouting, and an earthquake slamming of doors through the house as its occupants one and all sped to safety. Finally the voice of the master assuring the invisible household that all was well, and that the monkey would never bite any one if they

did not show that they were afraid of him.

Jack died in a fit, and was mourned only by the master and the faithful kitchenmaid. Yet had he and his fellow had any desire for social success it would have been easy for them to have achieved it in a family so inured to pets as ours.

But monkeys are worse than tactless. They understand their own hideousness and unpopularity, yet will not make a step towards amiability. A little leaning to the pathetic would have made us adore them, but they prefer to remain malevolent, remote, uttering coarse, mysterious grunts and screeches, out of hearts full of cold devilry. It is in keeping with their vulgarity that they should thrust their way into an assemblage of pets; an insult even to the kid and the rabbit, an outrage to the memory of Bran.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A PUMP

THE BIOGRAPHY OF A PUMP

The date of its birth is uncertain. A torpid tradition places it in the Early Victorian Era, but the Regency is more probable; even the Rebellion of '96 may not have been beyond its ken. Being a native of West Galway, neither Regency nor Early Victorian Era was likely to be an epoch in its surroundings. It belonged to the period when

> ". . . Dick Martin ruled
> The trackless wilds of Connemara;"

and the men who put it in its place scarcely knew whether king or queen ruled in an England that was as remote from them as the India of to-day.

It is probable that in the youth of the pump its labours were light. Baths were the eccentricity of a few, a revival of the corrupt

days of the Roman Empire; and the process by which the stalwart fox-hunter of the beginning of this century got into his clothes was one that it might be well to slur over, invaluable as he and his costume have been to the Christmas numbers. Vast and simple cooking operations, conducted on an open grate four feet long; vats of meat pickle lying in cellars where the light came greenly through ivied windows; cauldrons of potatoes, and possibly cauldrons of punch; these formed the highest claims on the water-supply before the dynasty of the bath was proclaimed in the establishment. The deathless discontent that followed the innovation has produced many stirring household episodes, none of them more sudden and complete than that which occurred on the day when one of those vessels of wrath, the bath, was repainted for the first time. The local carpenter had arrived for the purpose, with what disdain for such trifling can be imagined. Arriving early, he discovered the bath as yet unemptied, an added insult to a man whose time was much occupied with fishing on the lake, and other serious matters. The housemaid, with ill-timed coquetry, put out her

tongue at him when approached on the subject. In silence more bodeful than repartee he returned to the bath, carried it to the door, and emptied its contents down the passage. A stupefied stillness fell upon the bystanders, then arose outcry almost choked by rage, while behind a locked door the carpenter whistled and audibly chuckled over his work.

In those days the turf-boy was an institution, oppressive, but necessitated by an establishment where coal had never been seen, and an armful of turf burned away in an hour. All day they plied bare-foot between the turf-house and the various fuel depôts of the house with baskets of the long, hard sods on their backs, and guile and mutiny in their hearts, because that with the office of turf-boy was linked the hated one of water-carrier. About this latter clustered battles of endless variety, involving the sacred person of the cook, and frequently topped as with a banner by her giving of warning. After long warfare it was lightly thought that the exodus of cooks might be stayed by the introduction of a self-filling boiler supplied from a small tank, which must, by Median

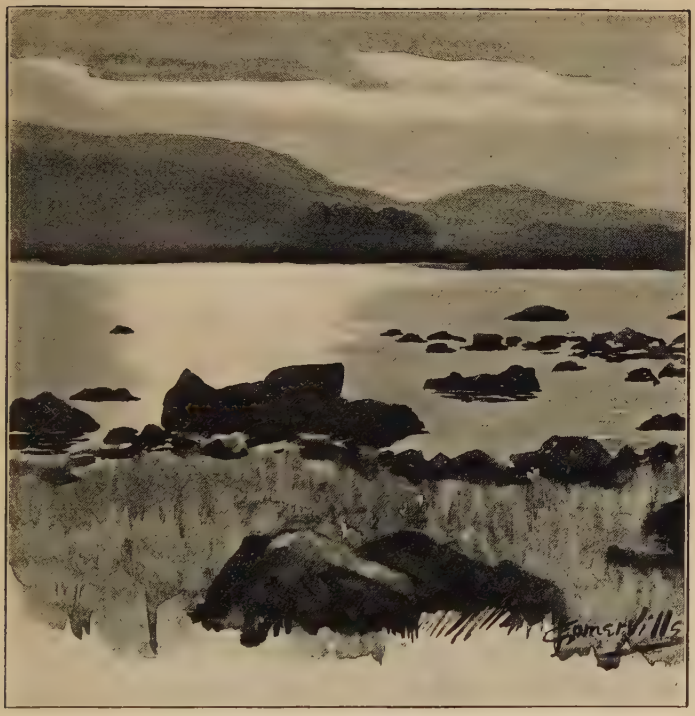
and Persian law, be replenished every morning. It was done, and for an incredible fortnight the charm of novelty retained its hold on the turf-boys; the tank was filled, the ball-cock did its work like a book, and the Dublin cook was fain to seek another grievance. The inevitable hour drew on when the tank, like any other entertainment, must cease to amuse, the hour in which it ebbed unreplenished to its dregs, while the turf-boys, much preoccupied with making a wicker snare for blackbirds, known as a cradle-bird, sat round the fire, and dismissed the boiler from their minds with a calm, native trust in Providence. It was in the meridian of this peace that the boiler burst, with a single and shattering report. What followed on that crack of doom it is not necessary to record; the imagination of any householder can shadow forth the attitude of the cook, and no living pen could reproduce the flight of the turf-boys.

It is more agreeable to turn to another scene, in which the pump played its part to a limited extent, when, on the last night of the old year, the coach-house was garlanded with holly and ivy, and "Pete-een bawn," the

Albino fiddler, sat on high on a window-sill, twitching out jigs and reels from the fiddle that he played on his knee, while the thick boots of a roomful of dancers kept light and unflagging time. As the crowning hour of twelve drew on, preparations began for the brew of punch that was to usher in the new year, and a tasting committee, formed of the gamekeeper and the kitchenmaid, was met by the supreme question of what to brew it in. A bucket was considered too small, the churn was rejected because it had "an ugly smell." Finally some genius bethought him of a hip-bath. The bath was snatched from the nearest bedroom by a bevy of turf-boys, the stone jar of John Jameson was emptied into it, and followed with more reticence by kettles of boiling water; all that remained was to provide each guest with a cup to dip into the reeking pool. Ten minutes later the bath was empty, and a ring of boys radiated from it at full length, lapping the last drops, and even licking the enamel, while the dancing was resumed with startling emphasis. Outside, a light snow was on the ground, the north wind blew dark in that bitter midnight, and the ice on the lake uttered strange

sounds — hollow, musical shocks with the voice of the imprisoned water in them. Every tree in the woods stood separate in white silhouette, the rime sifting through the branches in a dry whisper. Upon this subtle mood of winter came forth from the open doors of the coach-house the light of lamps with tin reflectors, the shrewish scream of the fiddle as Pete-een bawn jerked his white head in accord with "The hare was in the corn," the aroma of punch and of clothes seasoned in turf smoke. It is better to withdraw from these early hours of the new year, before the uncertain homeward footsteps blotted the thin snow, and the exponents of the genial first stage of drunkenness assisted the exponents of the aggressive second stage to pull themselves together for early Mass.

It has been mentioned that the pump was subject to chronic and mysterious ailments, on which every skilled opinion in the country was brought to bear, while the water famine was sore in the land, and the turf-boys plied with buckets and bewailings between the lake and the cook, aud unearthly pronged creatures gyrated in the water-bottles. It was during one of these visitations, when the



ROSS LAKE

back yard was torn up into entrenchments, and the pump lay two miles away at the forge, that the Garrygillihy horse races were held, and with this event the revolt of the turf-boys broke forth. On the previous day they concealed themselves in an old limekiln and mended their trousers; on the morning itself they made the simple statement that "if the servants was to die dancing for turf and wather they'll not get it to-day," after which ultimatum they were seen no more. Many things happened in their absence, not at first sight connected with it; the cook went to bed in the afternoon, the hens walked upstairs to the pantry, and picked out the inside of a plum cake, and a cow got into the coach-house, and ate the cushion of the car. The cook gave warning next day, the kitchenmaid, in tears, followed suit, because the cook had called her a "jumper" (*i.e.*, a pervert to Protestantism); the housemaid, also in tears, asserted that the kitchenmaid "had a spleen agin her," and the stableman was heard darkly soliloquising over the cleaning of the bits that "a lie was *something*, but there was no dealing with a d—d lie." All these things were

subsequently traced by tortuous ways to the grand central fact that the turf-boys had gone to the Garrygillihy races.

There came at length a notable crisis, when the pump showed that it had, like most of its countrymen, a power of rising to the occasion. It was on a bright morning in May that the kitchen chimney caught fire, an event of yearly occurrence, and by no means displeasing to the authorities. The big shaft roared with furnace heat up its eighty feet, the ugly blaze wavered from the chimney top; a few buckets of water were poured down, and all became quiet. It had happened in the immemorial manner, but just once too often. Four hours later, in the stillness of the hot afternoon, the voice of the fire was heard again, a soft, busy crackling in the timbers of the roof, a muffled booming sound that grew above it; a tongue of flame through the slates, a drip of melted lead from the eaves, and the house was full of shouts and rushing feet. An hour afterwards the battle was over, and the toilers could fling themselves down, breathless, to realise an incredible escape, and the clang of the pump handle ceased. Throughout that hour of

stress none of the pump's repertoire of evil symptoms was exhibited, nor did it fail to respond to the astonishing variety of receptacles presented to its grim beak. Next day it gasped forth the mud of the bottom of the well, and fell into a fractious disorder from which it has never rallied; but none the less the old house at its back owes its life to the allegiance of its comrade of a hundred years.

HUNTING MAHATMAS

HUNTING MAHATMAS

MANY people have learnt from "Kim" what it is to be a "Chela," and there was a time, not long ago, when every self-respecting evening paper and most of the magazines had something sufficiently—or self-sufficiently—illuminating to say about Karma or the Mahatma. I am not skilled in Buddhism, but I have assimilated a fact or two about Mahatmas, and in so doing have become aware of wider issues.

A Mahatma, I believe, implies primarily a teacher, an instructor, a sage or hermit with intermittently social tendencies; it also implies the possession of many useful endowments. Matter and space appear to be negligible accidents to the competent Mahatma. As a mere after-dinner triviality he will summon you a cigarette from infinity and will

materialise it on the table; moving to higher things, he can produce a copy of the *Times* in the remoter parts of Tibet on the day on which it appears in London, advertisements and all, but exclusive, I fancy, of library privileges. Transcending these lighter accomplishments, however, is his power of transporting himself to a chosen place at a chosen time without visible means of progression. He, we are assured, can fade from the landscape with the beautiful elusiveness of a rainbow, and can develop himself elsewhere, in or out of the landscape, with a precision with which the rainbow cannot hope to compete.

There is a matter that seems to me to have escaped observation—it certainly is not generally admitted—that in society not notably occult, in what, in fact, are often spoken of as Hunting Circles (though why circles, save with a very bad fox, it is hard to say), these privileged beings are found. Unsuspected, unappreciated, his high gifts often despised, even disliked, the Mahatma blooms in what might seem the uncongenial soil of many a hunting country.

There is a difference, distinct and, in my

mind, well defined, between the people who hunt and the people who go hunting. The people who hunt are the professionals; serious, impassioned even, but with subdued emotion; fanatics who live only to conjugate the verb To Hunt in all its moods and tenses; recognising implicitly the force of its imperative, accepting its future with joy, its past with loquacity. For them hunt numbers are compiled, and runs recorded with geographical accuracy and microscopic detail; they cut out the work, they give the time. Yet it is not among their thrusting ranks that the Mahatma is found. He is evolved, in perfect response to the need for him, among the wider brotherhood of those who go hunting. These are the true free lances of the chase. Having cast off the fear of public opinion, and purged themselves of the love of display, they have no conventions to respect and no position to lose. Hand in hand with their devotion to sport goes the most saving good sense. How despicable to these enfranchised minds must be the meaningless twists, the desperate endeavours of the zealots who, infatuated as a string of ants, surmount unwaveringly every obstacle

that lies in their path! As, from a pleasant hill side, the Mahatma views these struggles, he must surely feel how well it is with him, and how useful a thing it is to combine moral courage with intelligence.

"THE HOVERING HORDE VACILLATES NO LONGER"

But in a hilly and gateless country, such as Ireland excels in, moral courage and intelligence will not suffice; inspiration is needed, and straightway, out of a hovering and uncertain horde of riders, the Mahatma materialises. The hour has come, and the man. (These things, it may be noted, often synchronise with the interposition of the class

of fence that is like an east wind, in being neither good for man nor beast.) Without a shadow of hesitation the Mahatma turns his horse at a right angle from the line the hounds are running, possibly even in a diametrically opposite direction. It matters not; the result will justify him. The hovering horde vacillates no longer; no word is spoken, no allegiance sworn; his sovereignty is as instant and unquestioned as that of the queen bee; one telepathic moment has transformed them into his disciples.

It is here that the superiority of the hunting Mahatma to the religious variety makes itself felt. Like the Magic Carpet in the "Arabian Nights" he has the mystic power of transporting not only himself but his adherents. One moment and you may see him skilfully "knocking a gap" (*i.e.*, unbuilding a wall) or opening a gate, as the case may be, while the disciples wait respectfully; the next they are lost, swallowed up in the Fifth Dimension, or wherever it is that Mahatmas move and have their being. It may be a quarter of an hour afterwards, it may be twenty minutes; the hunt arrives, heated, something blown, and very proud of

itself, at a road where there is a momentary check. There, drawn up, calm and omniscient, is the Mahatma, with the disciples. He has seen the fox (who, it may not be out of place to note, is on these occasions always the largest dog-fox that the country has ever produced). He advises the huntsman, with perfect knowledge, where to cast his hounds, and once more betakes himself, with his party, to the Fifth Dimension. During the various turns and chances of the average hunting run in rough country, he is met with on every road that is crossed by the hunt. He is a directory of the most obscure and unsuspected gaps, an amateur of padlocks, a Samson who can lift from their hinges the gates of Gaza, or any other gates that may intervene. He is present at all disasters, and acts as a sort of convalescent home for their victims, and as a rallying-place for those who have been thrown out.

As I muse over his gifts, and the benevolence with which they are exercised, my heart warms to him and his compeers. Had I my way no hunt establishment should be without its own accredited Mahatma. He should be entitled to the letters M.F.H. as unquestioningly

as the Master. I would blazon them on his broad back (the Mahatma's figure is wont to be a fine one), plain for all men to see, and brand them on his ample sandwich-case. "Mahatma to the Meaths!" Any man might be pleased to have some such an inscription on his tombstone. "Mahatma to the Blazers" might hold some hint of incongruity; yet, however blazing one may be, there are moments——

It has happened to me, in a remote part of the County Waterford, to have lost the hounds, and at the same moment to find myself confronted by a frowning bank, hollow-faced, afforested with furze, wholly, as it seemed to me, impassable. While I surveyed it in dejection the cry of the hounds was borne to me on the wind; the music had a dying fall, they were running hard, and away from me. It was then that the voice of the local Mahatma fell like a falling star from the hillside above me.

"Go on a small piece to the right and ye'll get a passage."

I obeyed, and saw that hoof marks of cattle led to a cleft in the bank, so masked with furze bushes as to be invisible. I

squeezed through it, and found the valley smiling before me, and the hounds still within reach. But the Mahatma had gone.

I met him at the next check, cool and unruffled, silent as to the miraculous nature of his transit.

"Ye're barefooted," he said briefly.

"A VOICE FELL LIKE A FALLING STAR"

I found that I had indeed lost a fore-shoe.

Strange that such faculties as his should command so little general admiration! Upon his final manifestation, which occurred after the fox had gone to ground, I heard the Master say brutally :

"How the devil did *you* get here?"

The Master had given his horse two bad cuts.

The Mahatma maintained a Druid silence; it was not for him to comment on the eternal supremacy of Mind over Matter.

A PATRICK'S DAY HUNT

A PATRICK'S DAY HUNT

I WASH meself every Sathurday morning, whether I want it or no and 'twas washing my face I was when William Sheehan came in the door, and it no more than ten o'clock in the morning.

That's the way I remember 'twas a Sathurday, and Pathrick's Day was Monday.

"God bless the work!" says he.

"You too," says I.

"Would ye lend me the loan of a harness," says he, "to drive Anne Roche "—(that's his wife)—"to town on Pathrick's Day?"

The dear knows, says I to meself, if I walked two mile asking a harness it isn't to drive that one I'd ask it!

"I will to be sure," says I, "and welcome, but is it to town you're going on Pathrick's Day in place of going to Kyleranny? Sure you

know yourself there's the fun of Cork in Kyleranny when the Hunt's in it on a Holy-day!"

"I believe so indeed," says he.

"Faith you do believe it," says I. "D'ye remember one time," I says, "when the

"I WASH MESELF EVERY SATHURDAY MORNING"

Hunt was in it, Stephen's Day it was, you comin down Knockranny Hill hoppin' a quarther of a mile on your one leg, and the other foot fasht in the stirrup, and the owld mare you had that time throttin' on always. The Smith said it was the pleasantest thing ever he seen!"

"God be with the owld days!" says William, "that was long ago times, before I was married," says he.

"Thrue for you!" says I.

"Will ye lend me the harness?" says he to me again.

"Come here now William," says I, "you an' me is friends this many a year. There isn't one in the counthry I have as much wish for as yourself. The Divil sweep ye!" says I. "Sure it's follying the Hunt you should be, in place of goin' drivin' a side-car to town like a servant boy!" says I, "and you that was careing a puppy all the winter for the Hunt, the same as meself!"

"Ah, that was the grand pup!" says he. "'Twas a pity he died, and God knows," says he, "I dunno in the world what killed him, if it wasn't a bottle of varnish he dhrank one morning."

Faith, says I to meself, it's aisy known what killed the poor pup. It isn't long ourselves'd live if we didn't get our victuals!

I drew out then, and I gave William a puck in the chest.

"I'm tellin' you now," says I. "Dang the harness ye'll get from me on Pathrick's Day! No! But you'll throw the saddle on the pony a' Monday morning and you'll come out to the Hunt to jolly yourself!"

"Sure the pony has the colour o' lameness on him since I had him at Cappagh Fair last Tuesday, under pigs," says he. "That was thirty mile on him."

"Arrah! what signifies that?" says I, "that little horse is as tough as an eel!"

"And he have a sore place on his shesht, about as big as a thimble," says he.

"And is it on his shesht you'd go put the saddle?" says I.

"Well, it is not," says he.

"And as to go putting a collar and harness on a crayture that has the skin sthripped," says I, "if it was an ass itself the polis'd be afther ye for it."

"Indeed I'm told so," says he.

"Musha, Divil's cure to ye!" says I, "isn't it what ye can be tellin' your wife?" says I. "How simple ye are!" says I.

Not another word he spoke but to walk away out o' the house.

"Ye have the man annoyed with your thricks, Conny," says me wife, "why wouldn't ye give him what he was axing and not to be blackguarding that way? Maybe yerself wouldn't be so ready to go borrowing a harness for your wife?" says she.

"Maybe if I was married to Anne Roche it isn't me razor she'd take to go cuttin' spuds for seed?" says I.

"Arrah, sit down to your breakfast, Conny," says she, "and have done with your chat!"

"I'm tellin' you," says I, "if Anne Roche goes to town on Pathrick's Day, it's her own two legs'll carry her!"

"Glory be to God!" says me wife, "she'll be mad altogether! She'll tear iron!" says she.

"Divil mend her!" says I.

Now as for the foxy mare I had that time, I declare to ye if ye had her within in the stable, and to be keeping oats to her for two days, she'd have as much thricks and *tashpy* in her, and she'd be as anxious for the road as a lad that'd be goin' to a fair.

If she was to be kept within always and getting what she'd ax of hay and oats, it's all would be about it she'd break the sidecar! (and faith, she was nigh handy to doin' that same one time!) But what can a crayture do that's working always, and getting black potatoes for her diet?

I went to her St. Pathrick's morning early,

and the full up of a tin basin of oats in my hand. The very minute I opened the door:

"Ah—hem!" says she to me, this way.

"The Divil go from you!" says I, "wasn't the year long enough for you to get a cough, and not to be sick on Pathrick's Day? And if ye were coughing the full o' the house ye'll not stop within to-day!" says I, "ye can have your choice thing of coughing to-morrow!" says I.

And b'lieve me, 'tis she that had that same.

I rode her out quite and aisy, it's no more than five mile to Kyleranny, and the two lads of sons I have was legging it out before me.

"What have ye in the bottles?" says I to the eldest little fella when I passed them out.

"Milk, Sir!" says he.

"And what have ye in the bag?" says I to the other lad.

"Me boots, Sir," says he.

I knew well that was a lie for them, but I said nayther here nor there to them.

When I was passing Macarthy's, coming into Kyleranny, what was in it but William Sheehan's yella horse—"Shan Bui" is the name we has in this counthry for them yella

"THE LIKE O' THE CROWD THAT WAS IN KYLERANNY"

horses with the black sthripe on their back—and he outside the door, and a bag on his nose.

Musha, more power to ye William! says I to meself, ye stole away clever! But indeed

"IT'S ALL WOULD BE ABOUT IT SHE'D BREAK THE SIDE CAR!"

it's aisy known that Herself had the kay of the bin!

Himself came out then; he was afther drinkin' a couple or three glasses o' porther to hearten himself, the poor fella, and he was 'long with me from that out from first to last, but not a word good nor bad he spoke of the wife.

The like o' the crowd of people that was in Kyleranny that day never you seen—side-cars, and carts, and phaytons, and all

sorts, let alone them that was goin' huntin'. Ye wouldn't hardly know there was hounds in it at all with the dint of the people that'd be around them, and it'd be as good for you to thry to get into Heaven as to get past the cross roads. Ye'd lose your life cursin' before the owld women'd stand out from under your feet. Ye'd have to be going around them this way, the same as a person that'd be winding a watch.

"Is it sick the Major is, that he's not in it?" says I to Tim Hurley the Whip (that's the son of an Aunt of mine by the mother), when I got to come at him, "and Johnny Daly riding Monaloo?"

"He has the 'fluenzy," says Tim.

"Is it bad with him?" says I.

"He's bad enough to-day," says he, "but yesterday he was clear dead altogether."

"It's a pity anything would ail him," says I.

The Major was a fine man, always, and his family was a fine family. Sure me father used to say that in owld times if ye went to the Big House ye'd get the smell o' roast beef when ye'd be no more than half way up the avenue, and there'd be dhrinkin' all

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day and knockin' all night, and if ye axed the change of a half-crown, it wasn't in it.

Faith, I said to John Daly, there wouldn't be any fun, nor no cursin' nor nothing, when the Major wouldn't be in it.

"Maybe I might please ye yet before the day's out," says he, lookin' at me ugly enough. "Time's up!" says he then, and with that he comminced to bugle, and away with himself and Tim and the dogs, out north for Dempsey's Gorse.

Well, you'd have to pity William Sheehan if ye seen him that time follyin' the hounds out the road from Kyleranny to Dempsey's Gorse. As soon as me bowld Shan Bui felt the horses throttin, and batthering, and belting the road afther him, he made all sorts of shapes and forms of himself, and as for William, if it wasn't for the almighty howlt he cot of the crupper of the owld saddle, he was a dead man.

"Blasht your sowl, William!" says owld Dan Donovan to him, "if you would save your bones," says he, "you will lead him out now for a mile till you're coming up to Dempsey's, and when ye have the hill agin him then's the time ye'll get satisfaction!"

Well, William had great courage the same day. He held his howlt on the little horse out to Dempsey's, and when we come to the gap into the southern field, below the house, Johnny Daly went away in up through the land. Well, at the third field west of where Dempsey had the turnips two years ago, there was about three foot of a stone wall before us. The yella pony jumped it very crabbed, but the minute he landed, and he havin' the fall o' the ground before him, he made a ball of himself, and he bet a lash on Dan Donovan's owld white mare that wasn't sayin' a word, only goin' from step to step over the wall, like a Christian, and with that he legged it away down the hill!

B'lieve me, William was promising God that time that if he come safe out of it he'd howld to the side-car and not ax to go huntin' agin! But indeed poor William had great courage all through, only for the wife.

"Whatever way it is," says I to Dan Donovan, and we wheeling round the brink o' the hill, "every horse that's in it will have his 'nough of grass ate before the dogs'll have them furze bushes rattled out, and, I'm tellin' ye, that'll quieten them."

"The divil a fox is there in it at all," says Dan.

"Well, now," says William, "there's a woman of the Sullivans' that has a little house beyond, is afther tellin' me a while ago himself and his pups has a nest in it some place. Last week she seen them walkin' in and out of it, like young pigs."

"Maybe she didn't tell ye what way her sons has them pairsecuted with greyhounds and bulldogs and all sorts!" says Dan.

Well, divil such screechin' ever ye heard as what the dogs comminced then down in the furze.

"That's Fiddler!" says Dan, "that's a great hound! Maybe it's a cat he have nooked in it!"

"Faith, well is he called Fiddler!" says I, "he roars most furious."

"Look over! Look over at Johnny Daly!" says William, "what bugling he have now! If it's a cat itself, what harm would it do them to ate her! It's little ateing there is in the like of her; them poor craytures of dogs does be starved with the hunger; and that's what has them yowling this way."

"Look at Johnny skelpin' round the bog!" says I, "mind ye, he's souple yet, and he as gross as a bullock, and a back on him as long as a double-ditch!"

"Whisht!" says Dan, "that's the Whip man screechin' to the dogs! They have a fox surely!"

"Ye lie!" says William, "that's Jeremi'h Drishcoll's screech, I seen him within in the furze. Hi cock! Jeremi'h! Bate him out of it boy!"

"Ah, that's a fine sober fox," says owld Dan, "he'll not lave his den for them. It's a pity now," says he, "that the Major wouldn't have a fox keeping in a stable, and on a holiday, or the like o' that, to put a halter on him and lead him out before the hounds. Begob, he'd give them a nice chase!"

With that all the lads on the hills around let a roar out o' them.

"Hulla! Hulla! Hulla!" says they. "Look at the cat! Look at he! Look at he! Down him! Land him!"

Every dog that was in it legged it to the roar.

Well, if ye seen Johnny Daly comin' down

the hill that time ye'd think the fairies was afther him. He'd jump the house, he was that mad!

"Plase God he'll not come our way!" says I.

I declare to ye now, if you seen Jeremi'h Driscoll leppin' the furze bushes, and Johnny Daly afther him with the whip, ye'd as soon be lookin' at it as ateing your dinner. And as for Tim Hurley, you'd have to pity him, sthrivin' to go around every hound that was in it.

"The dogs have her ate! More power! They have the owld cat ate!" says Smartheen, that was sitting up on the wall behind us. "She was dam cute! I thought she'd besht them! The shkamer!"

'Twasn't long afther that till Tim Hurley had all the dogs gothered and counted, and 'tis he that got his own trouble with them! Them poor fellas of Whips catches great hardship. Johnny Daly faced away up the hill agin them, and the whole o' thim afther him.

"It's for Bludth he's making," says I, "and if that's to be the way, it's there ye'll see leppin!" says I. "Tighten yerself now

Dan!" says I, "thim banks above in Bludth does be made up very crabby, and as for walls, it's not stones at all they has in them, but bog mould and slates!"

Well, for all, poor William Sheehan had great courage that day.

"Your sowl to the divil, Smartheen!" says he. "Knock a few o' thim stones, boy!"

With that he gives the yella pony a salamandher of a belt, and he coorsed him about three turns around the field the way he'd knock the wind out o' him, in regard of he being out on grass always, and when he thought he felt him jaded it's then he faced him in at the wall. But in spite of all he jumped it very sevare and very ugly. Them Shan Buies is very piggish that way.

Meself, I don't like them flippant leppers; I'd like a horse that will put his two forefeet into the butt o' the wall, and give ye time to say two Aves and a Pather before he leps out.

"As for my mare," says I to Dan, the same time, "she boxed her knee a fortnight ago, and it's big with her yet, and faith she's avouring it always. And indeed that's a

cross place in any case," says I. "God bless ye, Smartheen," says I, "throw down a couple more o' them stones!"

I'm tellin' ye Smartheen was a decent civil boy always.

We follied on the bohireens afther that, ye'd think 'twas a wedding with all that was in it! Throttin' and steppin' their horses, and the hounds and the ladies and gentlemen and all out before us.

"Faith," says I, "they'd get as nice a shweat this way as what they'd get in any quadhreel whatever in Dublin Castle," says I, "and as for jogglin' and jowltin'," says I, "any one'd be the better o' this in his health while he'll live," says I.

Indeed, all that was in it was teeming down with the heat before we were up into Bludth at all.

Comin' up out o' the bohireen there was a stick left across in the end of it, keepin' in calves; a middlin' heavy pole, and the two ends fasht. If it was in the Cork Park races ye wouldn't see as much fun as what we knocked out of it with young Tom Dennehy! Sure he was ridin' the Docthor's grey mare, an' he dhressed out, and grand

yalla gaiters on him, and he in dhread of his life!

"Dennehy took great use out o' the bohireens all through!" says one of the lads "'tis time for him to throw a lep for us now!"

It's well the Docthor wasn't looking at them that time, and they weltin' the mare with switches and stones, and Dennehy howlding her back from the lep when she'd be gethered for it.—Begob! he fell heavy when the crayture jumped in the spite of him! And there's where the fun was!

Ye wouldn't blame him to be afraid if it wasn't for the dirty little boasting he has always. But indeed 'twould stun any one to hear the talk of the Dennehys.

"Mind yourself now, William," says Dan, afther the three of us had a place made out above on the hill for ourselves to stand aisy. "The hill tops is lakes afther the rain," says he, "though be Jingo!" says he, "that little horse went over the hill very knacky!"

"Look at Smartheen comin' down the bohireen over!" says I, "what have he in the bag? Ye'd say it was a side o' bacon with all the dogs that's snortin' afther it"

"Be dom!" says William, "but it's a fox!

Look at Johnny Daly that has all his own dogs dhrove in under the wall. B'lieve me, them two has it settled out! We'll see sport now," says he, "afther Smartheen'll throw down the owld bag and give the fox a couple of kicks for to rise his heart for him!"

Well, what it was vexed Johnny Daly I dunno, but he was mad altogether! He lepped out the wall before him, and he as wicked with the passion as that he didn't roar, nor say a word, till he had Smartheen cot by the coat and the whip ruz to him to sthrike him! Ye wouldn't know what was the two o' thim sayin', but Smartheen thought to run, and 'twas then Johnny cot the bag secondly to take it from him. Every lad that was in it comminced to cheer and to bawl when they seen the two o' thim in howlts. I believe meself let a few screeches, but as for William, if it was his father that he seen took by the polis, an' he dhrunk, he wouldn't have more nature for him than what he showed to that boy.

"*Hon-a-maun-dhiaoul!* He'll have him dhragged off the horse!" says Dan.

"He will! He will!" says I, "he's dam stubborn!"

Maybe if it wasn't for the way Johnny crooked the owld horse with the spur, sthrivin' to squeeze the leg around him, he'd have held his howlt, but a Turk couldn't stand it with the hoist that owld Monaloo let out of him.

"He's down!" says Dan. "He's dead! 'Tis on his head he's fallen!"

"Ye're a liar!" says William, "it's on the fox he fell! The big mastheen of a tyrant!"

'Twasn't long then till the whole of us was gethered lookin' at Johnny, and he ravin' like a cat in the measles, and every bit that was on him desthroyed with the gutther, and says he to Smartheen, givin' a bitter big curse:

"It's all I wish," says he, "that ye were a football before me! Ye wouldn't last me three kicks!" says he.

'Twould dhrive a chill through your stomach to be leshnin' to the talk he had. And sure the fox was as flat as the palm o' yer hand within in the bag!

"Oh, fie, fie!" says Dan, "our fox is gone from us!"

Indeed, ye wouldn't like to be lookin' at the crayture. Johnny Daly's a very weighty

man, and sure it's the last sthraw, as they say, put the hump on the camel. But in any case Smartheen battled it out well, and all that was in it was givin' him applauses.

Yerself knows Bludth, that there's as many hooks and pooks in it as that a person'd be moidthered before he'd have them gone around, let alone dogs, and horses.

"B'lieve me," says Dan, "'tis as good for them to give over; sure we're sick and tired waitin' on them. The fox that keeps this hill has a sthrong dungeon, and sorra fear of him to lave it for to be sporting for them. What a fool he is!"

"Yerrah shut yer mouth, Dan!" says I, "thim lads on the paikeen south is screechin' like as if they seen somethin'! What have ye over there?" says I, lettin' a roar.

"Yerrah, what are they sayin' at all?" says William, "it's like pigs talkin'! Sure I can't understand them no more than if I was a fool!"

With that the dogs comminced to gallop, and away with the whole of us. Well, William had great courage always.

"'Tis down the gully we should go, and

we'll be before them whatever side they'll turn," says he.

"Musha, the divil go from ye!" says I, "maybe it's down the chimbly ye'd have us

"HE'S GONE NORTH AGIN!"

go! Sure a man itself couldn't stand in it, it's that steep!"

"No, nor ten men couldn't!" says Dan.

"If it was the ugliest place in life, ye'll be hard set to find a betther," says William.

Well, afther all, we went down in it, as well as another, and you may say there was scroogin' and scramblin', and thim that was

afther us was bet down on us like a load o' hay, and thim that was before us cursin' black and blue for the way ourselves was squeezin' them.

"Faith! We're as throng as three in a bed!" says Dan, "the dogs could run away in their choice place and divil a one of us would know what side they went!"

"He's gone north agin!" says a lad above on the hill, and every one that was in it turned about in the gully and up with them up it agin.

"Maybe if it was himself was down in it he wouldn't have so much chat about goin' north!" says I, "and we twistin' in it like ye'd be dancin' a reel."

But as for William's little horse, if it was the roof of the chapel he was on he'd run in it like a bird, rocks or slates or any other thing, he wouldn't give a dang for them.

The sight'd lave your eyes if ye were lookin' at us afther that, comin' down out of Bludth, with slidin' and slippin', and buck leps and all sorts, and the dogs yowlin' away through the counthry from us. Great banks there was below in the fields. Every one o'

them that we come into my mare would crouch like a hen before it, and she'd let a screech, and over with her, and wouldn't lave an iron on it. That was her routheen always, only when she soured by the dint of the Shan Bui, that was baulking with William out before her. When I'd have to dhrive her over before me she'd be waitin' on me the far side of the fence, ateing grass, till I'd come afther her. She is a grand mare indeed, and high ginthry does be jumpin' mad to buy her foals.

'Twasn't long till we come up to the dogs, where they were searchin' and snuffin' round the four corners of the field, and divil a smell could they get. We seen a lad then standing up on a rock, waving.

"He's gone wesht up the road!" says he.

"Did ye see him?" says Johnny Daly.

"Faith I did so!" says me lad, "and he was the most courageous thief of a fox ever ye seen!"

I went up to the lad.

"Where did ye get the two coats, ye're afther throwing behind the wall?" says I.

"'Tis aiqual to you where I got them,"

says me lad, "ax no questions and ye'll be told no lies!"

"Faith, there's no occasion," says I, "sure it's you is good-natured to be carryin' the two coats that was on my two sons this morning," says I, "and you bloated with running," says I.

Divil a word he said, but away with him.

"Thim two young lads o' mine will be apt to get a bating before night!" says I to meself, "and they're in the want of it!"

"Forrad! Forrad!" says Johnny to the dogs, that was whining most peevish round and about, and you'd think if he never had a nose on him he'd get the smell o' the paraffin oil, it was that parsevarin'.

Two mile we legged it then, and the biggest walls in the counthry was in it, and God help them that had to be building them afther us! Comin' up Milleenavillen, William and a few more of us turned about round the butt o' the hill, for fear we'd be bet out entirely, and it wasn't long till we met with a great mountaineer of a big bank down in the widow Brinckley's land. Meself

dhrew out back a couple o' fields, and knocked a few sticks that was in a gap, but me brave William didn't do but to let a roar to the Shan Bui, and to land him two clouts in the jaw comin' into the bank. The Shan Bui lepped up on to it, as loose as a hare, with the fright, but what'd be before him only posts that the widow Brinckley had dhrove in the far side o' the bank, and ropes on them, and clothes hangin' out on them. He put a hump on himself like a ferret when he seen them, but if all the polis in Ireland was below mindin' the clothes, he'd have to change his feet and lep out on to them, with the gallop he had on him, and he cot the two hind legs in the ropes, and himself and William and the clothes was threwn down in the field.

"He's dead!" says I. "'Twould kill him if he was a bull!"

"'Twould, or if he was an ass," says young Tom Dennehy, that was on the eastern side o' the fence.

Well afther all, not a bit in the world was on him, only a tooth he had was stirrin' always in his head afther it. But I'm tellin' ye, the widow Brinckley faced him the same

"THE WIDOW BRINCKLEY FACED HIM THE SAME AS JEFFREY FACED HIS CAT"

as Jeffrey faced his cat, as they say, in regard of some sort of a petticoat the Shan Bui had dhraggin' afther him.

Out with the whole of us then from her into the road and left her afther us, and she dhrawing down saints and divils and the price o' the petticoat on us.

"It couldn't be," says I, "that it's into William's land the dogs is facin' now! Look at the line they're going beyond over the hill!"

"Begob, it is!" says Dan.

"If that be so it'd be betther for William to go under the sod!" says I.

Faith, I believe the divil was always busy with the Shan Bui! The very minute he got the smell o' the road under his feet, he comminced firin' and lashin', and when he had William loosened, it's then he legged it.

"He's diddled now entirely!" says I, "that horse won't stand or stay till he lands him within his own yard. The Lord look down in pity on William this day! Herself'll ate the face off him!"

Begob, the Shan Bui kept the one gallop always, the same as a thrain, and we battherin'

the road afther him, and the dogs and all screechin' down the hill before us. Your heart'd rise if ye were listenin' to them!

"He'll run to the say with him!" says Dan, "the two o' them'll be cliffted!"

"Sorra fear of him!" says I, "what a fool he is! Look at him now, tightening himself comin' down to the gate!"

Begannies! The villyan wheeled into the yard as nate as a bicycle, and every hound in the pack was in it before him!

* * * * *

Twas the week afther, and I goin' to owld Dick Courtney's funeral (the Lord have mercy on him) and who would I meet only Anne Roche!

Well now I declare to ye, divil such an ateing ever I got from any woman! The dogs wouldn't pick me bones afther her! Sure she pitched all that was within and without to the Seventeen Divils.

And sure there was no blame on me at all, only she seen them two young whipsthers o' mine when they thrown the owld bag they had with the ferret's bed back into her hen-house, and they near dead with thrailing it out through the counthry.

"THE VILLYAN WHEELED INTO THE YARD AS NATE AS A BICYCLE"

A half a gallon of paraffin they had soaked in it. If it was herself and not meself had one and eightpence lost by it she might be talkin'.

I'm told she gave William the Seven Shows of Cork on the head of it, but indeed poor William had great courage the same day.

ALSATIA

ALSATIA

No doubt the fact that it was forbidden, or mainly forbidden, lent it a considerable charm. The prohibitory edict was a semi-obsolete Statute of—say—the reign of Edward VI. Authorities, when driven to their last trench, fell back on it, declaring that no respectable children were allowed in stable-yards, or ever had been. We never argued the point. At an early age we had learned the folly of hardening fluid prohibition into adamant by argument ; but we did not cease from visiting the yard.

As I look back I see a procession advancing from the dimmest and most ancient places of memory, a procession as varied as that which in Maclise's picture slowly winds away from the Ark. Heading it are two figures who, in their prime, ranked equally as the

over-lords of the stable-yard, Old Michael, and the copper-coloured turkey cock. When one has attained an altitude of some considerable number of inches over five feet, it is hard to estimate the terror that a robust turkey cock can inspire in a person, however charged with valiant intention, of little more than forty-eight inches over all. The copper-coloured turkey cock was subtle as he was vicious; he appreciated as well as any Boer General the moral effect of a surprise. To face him, to go forth with intent to battle, was possible, even enjoyable, but at this moment I can feel the panic, blinding and disintegrating, of being taken in the rear; I remember the sound of the striding claws on the gravel behind me, the rustle of the stiff wings; were I but four feet high, and still wore short socks, I am convinced that I would run as hard if similarly attacked.

Coincident with the time that the turkey cock held sway, one of us had somehow acquired a dog, a meek, female creature, always engaged either prospectively or retrospectively in family affairs, and loaded with a spirit broken by long beatings from the back-door. She was white, with very

sore eyes and a long tail ; one of her relatives professed to be a bull-terrier, a fact much dwelt on by her proprietor ; but beyond the soreness of her eyes there was but little to substantiate it.

"Those village dogs had better look out," said the proprietor. "May-fly'll most likely kill them if she meets them."

She had come to us in May, and the name held for us the glamour of a hundred springs. Among the village dogs was one, contemptible beyond its fellows, known to us as Boiled Rice (a food specially abhorred by us, which her coat and complexion were supposed to resemble). Boiled Rice was generally on hand at or about the lodge gates, and one day May-fly was formally led forth to slaughter her. Boiled Rice was a small and disgusting creature, very old, and nearly toothless, and without reputation as a fighter. None the less, when located by our scouts she did not refuse battle. On the contrary, she bustled up to May-fly, and, rising upon the shortest pair of hind legs ever put under any four-legged creature save a lizard, laid her paws upon her shoulders and yapped harshly in her face. Then, if ever, the blood of the bull terrier

relation should have come into action; for some unfortunate reason that was the precise moment at which it ebbed. Our champion gave a squeak of resentful alarm, and, disengaging herself from the enemy, fled unpretentiously, unhesitatingly, without a hint of reprisal. For our parts we stoned and hunted Boiled Rice more mercilessly than ever after this overthrow. An unexpected aspect in the character of May-fly was that she, who fled from every living thing, remained unmoved by the ferocities of the copper turkey cock. At a word from us, and it was a word often spoken, she would take him by his scarlet and bulbous beard and gallop him off into remote places, from whence, long afterwards, he might be seen gloomily returning, a discredited and bedraggled despot. It was her sole achievement, and one greatly valued by us, but, unfortunately, it found no favour with the authorities, and one night she and the then puppy—she always had a puppy or so in her lair behind the potato house—were swept.

Neck and neck with the copper turkey cock came Old Michael, equal in malignity, but less active. He was nominally a stable

"SENDING HIS WILD VOICE ABROAD"

OLD MICHAEL

helper, and was also a self-constituted spy in the service of the government—or rather of the governess—and a more implacable tale-bearer never truckled to authorities.

"The two o' them is round back o' the cow-house, Miss. It's now this minute I seen them climbing out over the garden gate!"

Thus we, prone on the slant of the cow-house roof, under the drooping laurel branches, with our pockets crammed with green, young apples, have listened, panting, to our betrayal. Any other man on the place would have lied in our cause with chapter and verse.

There was a tradition about Old Michael that he had once been bitten by a mad dog, and had thereupon, as a recognised antidote, killed the dog and eaten its liver. There was something luridly attractive about the transaction, and we often discussed the possibility as to whether the liver had thoroughly played its part, and whether it might not be that he suffered from slight chronic hydrophobia, and that, at any moment, he might turn snarling and foaming upon us. His ordinary manner lent itself to the fancy, his

rages were so explosive, his yells at the horses under his charge so ungoverned, so screeching. One of these was a white pony that might have walked straight out of a fairy tale, in which he would have been exclusively employed as palfrey to the principal Princess. He had been bought through, or from, we never quite knew which, an old farmer, one Jer Sullivan, who lived at the head of a long and lonely Atlantic cove, and was as much fisherman as farmer, and more beggar than either. His main source of income was a petition in which was feelingly narrated the manner of death that befell his only horse.

"She was clifted one night by dogs hunting her, and drowned in the tide, and I have no one now to trust to, only the Lord."

Thus sorrowed the petition, Christmas by Christmas, getting a little browner as time went by, but no less insatiable. One windy Christmas Eve Jer Sullivan and the petition had appeared as usual, together with the horde of old women who, by long-established custom, received a dole on that day.

In the twilight of the December morning they came by twos and threes, fluttering up the avenue, looking, with their long dark

cloaks and thin red legs and feet, like the choughs that used to breed in the neighbouring cliffs. Upon the wet grass on the way round to the stable yard they squatted in a

"ANCIENT WIDOWHOOD AND SPINSTERDOM"

gabbling row, waiting for the coming forth of the master, and chaffing Jer Sullivan for having joined the ranks of ancient widowhood and spinsterdom, with the unquenchable spirit that lurks in the oldest and most forlorn

Irish peasant woman. On this occasion, Jer, having exhausted his stock of repartee, planted himself on the hall-door steps.

"Is the granddada comin'?" he called through the window to us, assembled in the hall. His face, wrinkled and grizzly, was pressed against the glass, his filmy eye was full of unutterable things.

"I have a present for ye!" he said, as soon as we had opened the door.

To expect a begging petition, and instead of it to be threatened with a gift, is something disconcerting, but we were young, too young to know the mental and financial wear and tear involved by a present from such as Mr. Sullivan.

"What would you be sayin' to a nate little pony?" went on Jer, with a beguiling smile that was staked out by four huge yellow teeth. "Sure a friend o' mine has him below at the gate. Wait awhile now——"

He paused, with an artist's knowledge of effect, and strayed away down the avenue in the indefinite manner of beggar men.

The ceremonial of the gifts pursued its usual course. The Master moved down the row, a silence of expectation before him, a

cackle of blessings behind him; as each received her dole she gathered her ragged plumage about her and flitted away, blessings still flowing from her as the steam-clouds trail out behind a train.

To us again, after breakfast, returned Jer Sullivan, and, incredible sight, he was leading a small pony. It was about thirteen hands high; in colour, dirty white, with a very wild eye, a figure like a toast rack, and a long tail.

"Sure your Honour knows the breed of him well. His dam was by the Kerry Diamond, the same as your Honour's coach-horses, the grandest horses in the globe of Ireland!"

Jer took a pull, and the Master eyed the pony in deep silence; the pony eyed us and snorted apprehensively.

"Sure the granddam of that one," resumed Jer, "was no loftier size than himself, an' she took a load out o' Banthry, an' a woman, an' three bonnives, an' two bundles o' spades, an' seven hours was all she took comin' to Tragumena Strand."

"What do you want for him?" said the Master. To say that our hearts leaped in us at this approach to business, is to put the

thing very mildly. They rolled and rioted like porpoises in a summer sea, what time the Master, and Jer, and Jimmy Hosford, the coachman, who had joined the action irrepressibly, moved round and round in the slow orbits of the deal. The fiction that the pony was a present had been abandoned, the thing had narrowed to a duel between Jer Sullivan and Jimmy Hosford. The Master had made his offer—£5, I believe—and had strolled away.

"There isn't as much condition on him as'd bait a hook," said Jimmy Hosford.

"Oh, Jimmy!" we screamed as one man, "he's a lovely——"

"Ah, God help ye!" said Jimmy Hosford, washing his hands of a bargain in which he had to suffer such collaborators.

"My darlin' childhren," said Jer in a hoarse whisper to us, "don't mind for he bein' a small bit thin an' wake in himself; it's what ails him"—the whisper deepened and thickened—"he was ridden—by nights!" he paused awfully; "wouldn't I find him in the mornings bate out an' sweatin'; an' signs on it, the world wouldn't make him cross runnin' wather!"

"Who rode him?" said we, thrilling to the implied mystery.

Jer looked right and left over his shoulders.

"Those People!" said he.

A fairy-ridden pony! It needed but that touch of romance. The pony was bought. £5 and a weakling heifer calf were the terms finally agreed to. The explanation offered subsequently by Old Michael that it was the Tragumena boys that took the pony by nights for blagyarding, and to ride him in the tide, was dismissed with deserved contempt; the pony was called Fairy, and a better never bolted in a snaffle, or kicked its rider over its head when invited to jump a stream.

Those who have in any measure dipped below the surface of stable yard politics, can hardly fail to have become aware, even in a minor degree, of the subtle relations existing between the house dogs and the yard cats. That an understanding, almost amounting to a treaty, obtains, there can be no reasonable doubt. That the dogs are ashamed of it is certain; that the cats are not, is a fact bound up in the character of cats, who are never ashamed of anything. But yesterday,

unsuspected and unseen, I viewed a typical instance of the strange and chilly truce that holds in the ashpit when the house dogs, the yard cats, the turkey cock, and, most implacably hated of all by all, the *pensionnaire* hound mother and her brood, feasted horribly and illicitly among cinders and refuse. The house dogs, furtively and hurriedly, with ears laid back, and guilty pauses in mid-bone; the hound mother grossly and jealously, something disposed to truculence; the turkey cock contemptibly, with sunken tail, and wattles of faded pink, prepared to skip four times his own length if the hound mother so much as looked at him.

Of the whole party the hound puppies and the cats alone showed to any advantage. The puppies, jovially unaware of the momentousness of each instant, sprawled and croaked over the woolly shin bone of a lamb; the cats were unalterably dignified, nibbling with deliberate daintiness the remains of a long-interred cod-fish. A millennial peace rested upon the scene.

It was possibly half an hour later, when those ineffable snobs, the house dogs, basking in the smiles of the aristocracy, had their

attention drawn to the creeping grey form of the yard Tom, making fowling observations in the shrubbery. Like twin bolts from a thunder-cloud they sped on the chase ; two highly connected white fox-terrier ladies, shrieking shrill threats at the intruding vermin. No wonder the yard Tom galloped. Yet the close observer could not but notice that as soon as the distance from the quarry had been reduced to some three or four feet, it remained fixed at that. In that nicely maintained interval was embodied one of the most immutable clauses of the treaty.

The treaty, however, and all connected with it, were of the most artificial and trifling to that child of nature, the hound mother. She, like her many predecessors, pretended to no higher sphere of operations than the stable yard.

"The care of my children and the surveillance of the ashpit," she seemed to say, "are all I demand."

But, like her predecessors, a more accomplished and wide ranging thief never jumped on to a kitchen table, or smirked hypocritically outside a hall door on the chance of making a dash upon the dining-room. It is

not long since that history, for the twentieth time, repeated itself.

"The ham! the ham!" wailed from the dining-room the voice of the mistress. "Niobe has stolen the ham!"

The sequel was given by the laundry-woman, herself long versed in the ways of the stable yard, and of hound mothers.

"I was west in the field spreading the clothes, when I seen herself sthretched above on the hayrick. Divil blow the stir that was out of her! I knew by her she was at something! An' afther that I dunno why she wouldn't bursht with all the wather she dhrank! She has the divil's own inside!"

"IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH"

"IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH"

When I first heard these words I was not highly impressed by them, or by anything at the moment except the redness of the bridegroom's nose, and the surprising manner in which one of "the young ladies'" dresses had been coerced into fitting the bride. The solemnities of the service passed, in every sense, over my head, which was then not much higher than the table at which the priest stood; indeed, it was only by putting forth the fullest wriggling powers of childhood that I was able to gloat in comfort on the bride's blushes from a loophole between the turf-flavoured folds of her mother's Galway cloak and the repressive elbow of my elder brother. Why the ceremony should have taken place in the vestry I

cannot say, beyond that it was a custom in the little Roman Catholic Chapel of which I write; just as it was in those friendly days a custom with us to go to the marriages of the tenants, and to take our share of the blessing and the sprinkled holy water.

The accustomed gold, silver, and copper were laid on the book by the bridegroom, the portentous words were spoken, with the melancholy Galway accent adding its emphasis to them, and at the next interval the priest opened the window behind him.

"Run down to Mick Leonard's for a coal," he said in Irish to some one outside, and then proceeded with a most sound and simple exordium to the newly married pair.

In a few minutes there appeared in the open window a hand holding a live coal of turf in a bent stick. I can see it yet, the pale fire in the white ash of the sod, thrust between us and the blue sky, and the priest's hand put out to take it, but I cannot remember now what was its mission, whether to light a candle or incense.

After this came a sprinkling with holy water with something that nearly resembled a hearth-brush. A drop fell into my open

mouth as I stood gaping with the detestable curiosity of my age, and its peculiar, slightly brackish flavour is always the impression that comes first when I recall that day. There was a long business of hand shakings and huggings, and the wedding party squeezed itself out of the narrow vestry doorway, with hearts fully attuned to the afternoon's entertainment.

At the gate some shaggy horses were tied up, and having clambered on to one of these, much as a man would climb a tree, the bridegroom hauled his bride up behind him, and started for home at a lumbering gallop. Shouting and whooping, the other men got on their horses and pursued, and the whole clattering, bumping cavalcade passed out of sight, leaving us transfixed in admiration of the traditional "dragging home" of the bride. For me the only remaining recollections of the day are of a surfeit in the bedroom of the bride's mother, where in gluttonous solitude I partook of hot soda-bread, half a glass of luscious port, and a boiled egg; while the less honoured guests in the kitchen outside harangued and sang songs, and drank the wine of the country in

its integrity. My wedding garment was, I recollect, a holland "waggoner," loosely girt by a shiny black belt with a brass serpent buckle. At no subsequent wedding breakfast have I been as enjoyably dressed, and, as a natural consequence, at none have I eaten as much.

As my first distinct glimpse into matrimony it stands far back and detached ; after it, in the Bayeux tapestry of childhood, horses, dogs, and baffled governesses moved on in untiring confusion, for periods of unmeasured time, before the subject again presented itself.

There lives in my memory a Sunday morning in spring, when the little beech leaves were poised like pale green moths among the bare branches, and the northerly showers whipped the lambs into shelter. The servants had gone in a body to early mass, leaving the preparations for breakfast in the hands of Tom Cashen, a trusted friend and counsellor, whose ordinary business it was to attend to the affairs of the yard and its pigs.

There was soda-bread to be watched in the oven, there were saucepans and kettles resolved upon untimely boiling, there was porridge to be stirred, and there was also

Tom Cashen's dog, a hungry, furtive thing, capable at any moment of clearing the table of all that was upon it. The moment came, as it comes to those who wait with complete attentiveness, and Tom Cashen's dog did not let it slip. It was during the retributions of justice that the bread burned in the oven, the coffee boiled over on the range, and the porridge adhered massively to the bottom of the saucepan.

"I'd sooner be digging the clay from morning till night," said Tom Cashen, after a long and prayerful imprecation, "than to be at this kind of work. There isn't a man in the world without getting married but he's sure to die quare, and no wonder, from the work that's within!"

Translated into our inferior English this aphorism sets forth the opinion that a bachelor who has to do his own household work is bound to end his days in a lunatic asylum. This view of matrimony had not before been heard by me, and it seemed to be wholly reasonable. For one thing, the men in the yard were always right in our eyes, and always full of just complaints against the kitchen; in any case, the Work that was

Within—the arduous triflings with saucepans and sweeping-brushes—was certainly contemptible as compared with the realities and the fascinations of the stable and the hay-cart. The point of view of Mrs. Tom Cashen was not touched upon; I think I realised that she was not likely to have one.

She was described at the time of her marriage as "fine and fair and freckled, and a great warrant to fatten turkeys," and she walked two miles every day, with a basket on her back, to carry Tom Cashen's dinner to him—potatoes and boiled eggs, kept hot in a clean towel. Later on the dinner was carried by two barefooted little boys; from thence-forward, during many years, there was always a barefooted little boy or two to carry it, whereat the heart of Tom Cashen was glad, and so, in a modified degree, was the heart of Mrs. Tom Cashen, combating hourly, in a swarming cabin, with the Work that was Within.

Some time afterwards, when a spare son or two had betaken themselves, weeping direfully, to America, it fell to my lot to sit by the fire in the Cashen household, and to read aloud a letter from one of them, for the

enlightenment of his parents, who were not skilled in the finer arts. It was a most affectionate letter, inquiring in turn for all members of the family, and it enclosed an order for two pounds. It concluded as follows :

"I think, my dear father, I will not see you again, because you are very old and you will soon die, but when I come home I hope to have the pleasure of visiting your grave and crying my stomachful over it."

On receiving these cheering assurances the gratification of Tom Cashen was enormous ; it was more to him, he said, than the two pounds itself, and, in his own words, he "had to cry a handful."

There came a day when the words of the letter recurred in their extremest force. Within sight of the Chapel, spoken of further back, stands a ruin, with the ground inside and outside of it choked with graves ; mound and crooked headstone and battered slab, with the briar wreathing them, and the limestone rock thrusting its strong shoulder up between. In the last light of an October afternoon I found myself there, in a crowd that huddled and swayed round one intense

point of interest—a shallow grave, dug with difficulty, where was laid in its deal coffin the quiet body left behind by the restless spirit of Tom Cashen, at the close of a companionship that had always been interesting and generally happy.

The parish priest was ill, and his substitute was late; the matter was proceeded with in a simplicity that was quite without self-consciousness or embarrassment. Tom Cashen's eldest son, grieved, as was well known, to his gentle heart's core, had in a newspaper earth that had been blessed (by whom I know not), and from the newspaper it was shaken by him upon the coffin. Holy water was poured into the grave from a soda-water bottle, and the bottle itself thrown in after it; then followed the shovelling in and stamping down, and the tender twilight falling in compassion on the scene.

The crowd became thin and dispersed, and as I walked away meditating on things that had passed and things that had endured during an absence of many years, a woman kneeling by a grave got heavily on to her feet and called me by my name. A middle-aged stranger in a frilled cap and blue cloak, with handsome

eyes full of friendliness ; that was the first impression. Then some wraith of old association began to flit about the worn features, and suddenly the bride of twenty-five years ago was there beneath the cap frill. Five minutes told the story : ill-health, an everlasting pain "out through the top of the head," sons and daughters in profusion, and baskets of turf carried on the back in boggy places. "Himself" was pointed out among the crowd. His nose glowed portentously above a rusty grey beard, and beneath a hat-brim of a bibulous tilt. The introduction was not pressed.

The sunny Shrove Tuesday in early March lived again as she spoke, the glare of sunshine upon the bare country brimming with imminent life, the scent of the furze, already muffling its spikes in bloom, the daffodils hanging their lamps in the shady places. How strangely, how bleakly different was the life history summarised in the melancholy October evening. Instead of the broad-backed horse, galloping on roads that were white in the sun and haze of the strong March day, with the large frieze-clad waist to meet her arms about, and the laughter and shouting of the pursuers coming to her ear,

there would be a long and miry tramping in the darkness, behind her spouse, with talk of guano and geese and pigs' food, and a perfect foreknowledge of how he would complete, at the always convenient shebeen, the glorious fabric of intoxication, of which the foundation had been well and duly laid at the funeral.

The possessor of these materials for discontent was quite unaware of any of them. Her husband was as good as other people's, and seldom got drunk, except at funerals, weddings and fairs, or on the Holy days of the Church, and that was no more than was natural. Anything less would be cheerless, even uncanny. She introduced her daughter, "the second eldest, and she up to twenty years, and she having her passage paid to America with all she earned in the lace school." The young lady up to twenty years had her hair down her back, and wore a long coat with huge buttons, and a whole Harvest Festival in her hat, from which wisps of emerald grass drooped over the fierce fringe below it. To be very young, even childish, is the aim of her generation. The battle has been waged, even to weeping, by the ladies of the Big House, with a "tweeny" of

seventeen, who, on every descent to the populous regions of the yard and kitchen, plucked the hairpins from her orange mane, and allowed it to flow forth in assertion of her infant charms. The previous generation, superior in this as in many other ways, grows old as unaffectedly as animals; it is a part of its deep and unstudied philosophy.

"I'm very old now, sure," said the matron of twenty-five years' standing, with a comfortable laugh, "I think I must be near forty-five years."

Had she said sixty it would not have seemed much above the mark, and she would have said it with equal composure. I looked the conventional incredulity, and realised that it was thrown away. She, in return, assured me that for my part she had often read of beauty in a book, but had never till now really seen it, that my face was made for the ruin of the world, and that she'd know me out of my father's family by the two eyes and the snout. All was accepted with fitting seriousness, and the piece of news that had been held back with difficulty during these ceremonial observances, was at length given the rein. Had

I not heard of how her sister's daughter, down in Drohorna, had that morning brought three children into the world, daughters, unfortunately, but still a matter reflecting much lustre on the parish, and on that Providence that had singled it out from the Diocese for the honour.

The conversation abruptly closed, as the priest who was to have performed the Funeral Office scorched up on his bicycle, scarlet-faced, and half an hour late. As if the sight of him set the seal of the irrevocable upon what had been done, the widow of Tom Cashen broke into hoarse wailing; she was arduously consoled and taken away, and her husband was left behind in the solitude, he, who hated to be alone, and was afraid to pass the churchyard at night.

A discussion raged as to the opening of his strong box, the men who stamped down the earth on the grave using the action as an emphasis to their assertions. At length the churchyard emptied, the evening wind was raw, and in the gloom the white chapel on the hill stared with its gaunt windows, impervious to the life histories of its own making impossible as an accessory to sentiment.

"WHAT HAVE YE ON YER NO-ASE?"

Obvious duty has seldom gone more suavely hand-in-hand with perfect enjoyment than in the attendance of the parish, practically *en masse*, at the levée held next day, and for many succeeding days, by the Triplets. A grey road runs north and south past their cabin door, level on the level face of the bog for a shelterless half-mile, and neither wake nor "Stations" could have commanded a more representative gathering than went and came upon it in those moist autumn afternoons. The gander who lorded it over the nibbled strip of grass in front of the cabin yard was worn down to amiability by a hundred assaults on new comers and an equal number of glorious returns to the applause of his family; the half-bred collie, coiled under a cart, closed his cunning eyes to aggressions that were beyond all barking; a five-year-old boy with tough tight curls of amber, and an appallingly dirty face, regarded me from the doorstep with brazen *sang froid* as I approached, and said in a loud and winding drawl: "What have ye on yer no-ase?" Praise is seldom perfected in the mouth of the babe and suckling. I removed my pince-nez, and passed with difficulty into

a doorway filled with people, the blue smoke from the interior filling up the crevices. The father of the Triplets, a lanky young man, in the Sunday clothes in which he had just returned from making his application for the King's Bounty, was according an unchanging, helpless grin to the shafts of felicitation that beset him, the most barbed being screamed in Irish by the old women, to the rapture of the audience.

Behind this unequal strife the Triplets held their court, in a cradle by the fire, canopied with coarse flannel, and rocked unceasingly, one would say maddeningly, by a female relative with an expression of pomp befitting the show-woman. It suggested the bellringer who said, "We preached a very fine sermon to-day." The wicker walls rolled creakily. The rockers were uneven, so was the earthen floor beneath them, and each oscillation contained three separate jerks. In this bewildering world, composed of sallow blankets and an unceasing earthquake, the three brand new souls reposed as best they might; the show-woman's grimy hand parted their firmament of flannel, and revealed three minute faces of the pallor of lard, dome-like

"SHE'S THE LIVELIEST OF THEM, GOD BLESS HER!"

in forehead, with tiny and precisely similar features, wonderfully absorbed in sleep. The infant of a day old appeals unfailingly to the compassion, but its most impassioned adherent must admit that it is out of drawing. The light from the open door struck suddenly into the cradle, as some one clove a path through the assemblage; one of the absorbed faces worked in vexation, elderly, miserable vexation. Tears, too, angry and pitiful; the long slit of opening eyelid was full of them, the unseeing disc of dull blue within swam in them, the stately bald head turned to terra-cotta.

"She's the liveliest of them, God bless her!" said the show-woman, in high admiration, "but as for the little one-een next the fire, she'll never do a day's good. 'Twasn't hardly making day this morning when I had a pot of water on the fire for her."

Being interpreted, this meant that the little one-een by the fire had in the cold autumn dawn retraced her way so far into the white trance of the unknown that all was made ready for washing and laying her out. She lay like a doll made of pale puckered wax, her sleeping lids had a lavender tone, and

the shadows about her mouth were grey. Next morning the cocks had crowed but once when the pot of water simmered again over the turf fire, and the weak and lonely combat with death ended in defeat.

The life that she was not to share moved on about her in leisurely squalor; the smoke from the turf fire strayed languidly up the sooty wall, and blundered against the broad mouth of the chimney till the rafters were lost in the blue and settled obscurity. The walls were yellow with smoke; it was easy to imagine its flavour in the bowl of milk that stood on the dresser, ready for the invalid in the inner room. Obscure corners harboured obscure masses that might be family raiment, or beds, or old women; somewhere among them the jubilant cry of a hen proclaimed the feat of laying an egg, in muffled tones that suggested a lurking-place under a bed. Between the cradle and the fire sat an old man in a prehistoric tall hat, motionless in the stupor of his great age; at his feet a boy wrangled with a woolly puppy that rolled its eyes till the blue whites showed, in a delicious glance of humour, as it tugged at the red flannel shirt of its playmate.

"God save all here," said a voice, very dictatorially, at the door; a black-haired old woman shoved her way to the cradle, and parted the blankets with a professional air. She was a Wise Woman from the mountain, and foreknowing the moment when she would spit, for luck, in the faces of the helpless trio in the cradle, I jostled my way to the bedroom of their mother. It had an almost conventual calm. Moderate as was the light that struggled through a hermetically sealed window of eighteen inches by twelve, it was further baffled by an apron pinned across the panes; the air was heavy, reinforced only by the draughts and the smoke that entered hand-in-hand from the kitchen.

In one of two great beds the invalid lay in the twilight, with her hand pressed to her head. She was collected, well-bred, and concerned for the welfare of the visitor, and of all the visitor's relations, mentioned in due order of seniority. The glory of her position burned in two spots of excitement on her high cheek bones, but it could not eliminate her good manners. Her sister loudly recited the facts that she was using no food, only

sups of milk and water, that as for puddings or any little rarities, if you ran down gold in a cup she wouldn't let it to her lips.

"There's nothing in the world wide I could fancy," said the sick girl, feebly, "unless it'd be the lick of a fish's tail."

The entry of the Wise Woman, with a stentorian benediction, here drove me forth like a bolted rabbit, and having skirted the evil-smelling morass in front of the house, I breathed the large air of the bogs with enthusiasm. The evening was speechless and oppressive; it held like a headache the question whether it is useful to be sorry for those who are not sorry for themselves, and, unrepining, grope out their lives in the dark house of ignorance; and whether discontent with one's lot is not the mother of good cooking and other excellent things.

A week afterwards an emissary brought to the Big House the intelligence that the mother of the Triplets had in the interval been at the point of death, and had been anointed, had an impression on her chest, and could give "no account of the pain she had in her side, only that it was like a person polishing a boot, and there to be lumps in

the boot, and he having a brush in his hand." From out of these symptoms was distilled the fact that she had had pleurisy, acquired while walking barefoot in the yard to feed the calves. She entreated the gift of a pair of boots, and the emissary added, as a rider, the fact that the Colonel's boots would be just her fit. The Colonel was away, but the main body of his boots stood in battalions in his room. A pair of the dustiest was snatched, in a heat of philanthropy, and bestowed, and proved, we were given to understand, an invaluable adjunct to the feeding of the calves. It is worth mentioning that the Colonel, on his return next day, was by no means as gratified as had been hoped; they were, he said, the one and only pair of patent leather boots in which he could walk with comfort and credit in London, and the moving circumstance of Triplets had no power to allay his bitter and impotent wrath. His only tall hat had already been sold at a Jumble sale, and he did well to be angry. The cook, who had been sceptical throughout as to the necessity for the gift, tactfully reported that the Colonel's boots were too tight for That One, and brought from Second Mass the

comfortable tidings that they had preyed on her feet.

The cook, always lenient, after the manner of her kind, to the Colonel and all his sex, was at that time much preoccupied with matrimonial affairs. It was soon afterwards that a strange young man in Sunday clothes appeared at intervals in the yard, and melted like a wraith into dark doorways in the kitchen passages. He was found eating trifle in the servants' hall, and in the evenings he fished on the lake. He was, we discovered, the cook's brother, arrived from Loughrea to investigate the position of the swain whom the cook wished to marry. On the fourth day he passed imperceptibly out of the establishment, and the cook fought loudly and venomously with all who crossed her path. It transpired that the brother had visited the home of the aspirant, and had found, she said, that it was a backwards place, and a narrow house, and he wouldn't let her go in it. She had twice at Mass seen the candidate for her hand, she informed us, lamentably, and he was a nice young man, foxy in the face, and she got a good account of him. That it was remarkable, or at all

unpleasant, to marry a perfect stranger was a point quite outside her comprehension. She had never spoken to him, she admitted, but what signified, so long as she got a good account of him. It was afterwards discovered that the lover had been rejected because his family had been broom-makers, and that no self-respecting girl would look at him on that account. The point of social etiquette here touched remains still dark, but it was insuperable, and the cook eventually married the gentleman whose lofty calling it was to drive the butcher's cart.

The day before the marriage the battle was waged in the usual manner between the Loughrea brother and the bridegroom; greasy pound notes were slapped down on the table, the bride's savings were vaunted above the bridegroom's heifers and position as heir to his mother's bit of land, and with swaggering and bluff and whiskey drinking the bargain was concluded. Nothing could have been more frankly commercial; nothing, apparently, could have given more satisfaction. The cook departed, and lived in a cabin with a variety of her husband's relatives, who were by no means overjoyed at the

circumstance; potatoes for dinner, and stewed tea morning, noon and night were her diet; the hens roosted above her bed, she weeded turnips and "spread" turf, she grew thin and pale, but never, so far as is known, did she repine, or regret the print dresses and the flesh-pots. The butcher's driver was "a quiet boy," better than most husbands; had it been the broom-maker, foxy in the face she would have made him an equally good wife. In a community where old maids are almost unknown, the only point worth considering was that she was married and had a "young son," and every man and woman in the country would have said that she was right. In traversing the point we should run our heads against a wall of primeval instinct.

Writers of novels, and readers of novels, had better shut their eyes to the fact, the inexorable fact, that such marriages are rushed into every day—loveless, sordid marriages, such as we are taught to hold in abhorrence, and that from them springs, like a flower from a dust heap, the unsullied, uneventful home-life of Western Ireland. It is romance that holds the two-edged sword,

the sharp ecstasy and the severing scythe stroke, the expectancy and the disillusioning, the trance and the clearer vision.

It is even more than passive domestic toleration that blossoms in the cramped and dirty cabin life, affection grows with years, and where personal attraction never counted for much, the loss of it hurts nobody.

"Their hearts were within in each other," was said of an elderly couple, who, thirty years before, had been married in the priest's kitchen on the last night of Shraft; married as a happy thought, and by the merest chance. The lawful bride had taken her place by the bridegroom, but, changing her mind at the last possible moment, sprang from her knees, and declined the ceremony. As her betrothal was probably an affair of that afternoon it was not so dramatic an action as might be assumed, nor did it cause any hitch in the proceedings. The priest looked round the well-filled kitchen.

"Here, Mary Kate!" he said to his servant, "come on you, and marry the man! Sure you wouldn't let him go away, and he after walking five miles in the rain!"

Mary Kate knelt down by the bridegroom.

We do not hear of remonstrance on her part, and thirty years afterwards, when their children were married or gone to America, it was said that this couple's "hearts were within in each other." It was said with perfect perception of the ways and the deeps of devotion; but the absence of it at their wedding was not worthy of remark, and in these things is the essence of the Irish nature, that keenly perceives sentiment, and contentedly ignores it.

"She isn't much, indeed," said a farmer of exceeding astuteness, when questioned about his matrimonial intentions, "but she's a nate little clerk." By this was delicately conveyed the fact that she could read and write, and that he could not. The marriage was highly successful.

Years afterwards a friend said to him in congratulation, "Well, James, I hear you married your daughter well."

"I did, sir, and I got him cheap." Then in a whisper, "He was divilish owld."

The computation by which the years of the bridegroom were set against the purchase money—in other words, the bride's dowry—must have been an intricate one, involving,

one would say, the tables of insurance, and the best skill of the nate little clerk.

Congratulations, not unmixed with some genial surprise, were proffered to another parent on the marriage of his daughter, a person by no means in her first youth, and possessed of but one eye.

"Sure I had to give him ten pounds agin' the blind eye," explained the father of the bride, with unimpaired cordiality.

There is here no material, of the accepted sort, for a playwright; no unsatisfied yearnings and shattered ideals, nothing but remarkable common sense, and a profound awe for the Sacrament of Marriage. Marriage, humourous, commercial, and quite unlovely, is the first act; the second is mere preoccupation with an accomplished destiny; the last is usually twilight and much faithfulness. The dialogue is a masterpiece throughout, epigram, heart-piercing pathos, with humour, heavenly and inveterate, lubricating all, Perhaps the clue to success lies here, in the mutual possession of agreeability and the good nature that goes with the best agreeability; certain it is that with a command of repartee that makes fighting an artistic

enjoyment, their conjugal battles are insignificant.

The two-fold heart of the race beats everywhere in the confusion; gross worldliness, and a matrimonial standard clear and unquestioned as the stars; Love the negligible quantity, and attachment the rule. It is for us, more singly bent on happiness, to aim at rapture and to foreknow disappointment.

HORTICULTURAL

HORTICULTURAL

I ADMIT that I hesitate at the thought of pressing into the elect company of those who have discoursed upon gardens. From Lord Bacon down to the Poet Laureate, from the Poet Laureate up to that self-sufficing and yet voluble "Elizabeth," of whose German Garden all the craft have read, there seems no inch of garden sod that has been left unturned. I ask myself: Have I any original suggestions on, for example, The disbudding of 'Mums? (a term of horrid familiarity that I have seen applied to Chrysanthemums). Any high thoughts on Manures? Any special convictions in the matter of mulches?

My conscience, far from admitting ability to treat of these solemn things, reminds me

that but little more than a year ago I should scarcely have been entrusted with the weeding of a gravel path, and hints at that Affair of the Coltsfoot. It is, in fact, the Coltsfoot Affair that decides me. I cannot be a guide or a sign-post, but I can be a scarecrow. I would say a moral scarecrow, though it may be conceded that the costume of the gardening amateur often lends itself to the more practical *rôle*.

I was not at all aware of being in the movement when I found myself snatching at my weekly copy of *Gardening Illustrated* in preference to the daily paper, and brooding heavily upon delphiniums when I might have been profiting by the sermon. It was only by degrees, as I went about the world, that I noted how quick and strong would beat the answering conversational pulse at the mention of a garden, at the sighing reference to the arrangement of a herbaceous border. It seemed that every second person I met was as much of a gardener as I was, in the matter of enthusiasm, and, as they might easily be, something more in the matter of practice. This discovery revolutionised society for me. It has doubtless done so

for many another. The most penal afternoon visit may have its alleviations in a valuable hint on "the desire of the rose"—not for the star—but for the cleanings of the scullery drain; the most inveterate dowager may be found to be a man and a brother, profoundly versed in daffodils, full of lore about "Alpines." How astonishing it is to find oneself cheerfully, even ardently, assenting to what would once have been regarded as the hideous proposal to "Walk round the garden!" Such a walk has ceased to be a penance; it has become something, not quite a scouting expedition, not quite a (herbaceous) border-foray, not quite a "beggar's lay"; but it has something in it of the charms of all three. Which element preponderates depends on the character. There are moss-troopers born, who will twitch off a cutting, and filch a seed head, uncontrollably. There are heaven-endowed mendicants who will yearn and flatter the filling of a flower bed into a knotted pocket handkerchief. It is a useful principle to accept everything, regardless of the accident of the seasons. There are many other accidents of far higher importance to be

considered—lapse of memory on the part of the giver, for instance, or repentance. In the amenities of gardeners, as in love, the advice to "Take me when I'm in the humour," is sound, and a cutting in the hand is well worth six in or on the bush, when the bush is another's.

I believe it is the gambling element that gives to gardening so potent a charm—that, and the seedmen's catalogues. One of my first adventures was in response to a singularly seductive advertisement — "Humulus Lupulus," it said, "The finest creeper in the world. Grows forty feet in a single night. Massive clusters of yellowish blossoms. Beautiful; Healthy." I have the constitutional misfortune to believe, unquestioning, the printed word. Even now I find it hard to discount the flights of fancy of that poetic idealist, the advertising nurseryman. I despatched eighteenpence by the next post; received by return an undemonstrative bundle of little roots, planted them prayerfully in a choice place, and then, as it happened, left home for a time. On my return to my garden I found the usual crop of catastrophes and compensations, but

disregarding all alike I sped to the site of the Humulus Lupulus. There had been near the same spot a highly esteemed rose, "Climbing Captain Christie." The first thing that greeted me was the wan, indignant face of a Captain Christie, who, having climbed for all he was worth, was none the less overtaken, and was now gazing at me in strangled pallor from the depths of a thicket of common hops. The Poetic Idealist had triumphed.

I have never been able precisely to ascertain to what extent Bat Whoolley found me out in the Affair—already alluded to—of the Coltsfoot. Bat is my gardener, and I value his opinion highly, almost as highly as he does himself, though possibly with more limitations. Winter Heliotrope was what my neighbour called Coltsfoot. I felt there was something not quite sound in the lavish way she pressed it upon me. She said there was nothing like it for covering bare places, and that I might dig it up for myself and take all I wanted. That specious permission might have warned me; so also might the singular fact that my neighbour's shrubbery had for undergrowth naught save the curving

leaves of the winter heliotrope. None the less, I planted out two or three colonies of it on the outskirts of the rock garden.

One morning, at the turn by the pine tree (one of my colonies had been unostentatiously planted in a bare place behind the pine tree), I met Bat. His face was redder than usual, and there was something very searching in his eye. Mine did not meet it.

"Look at that!" he said.

He held up a handful of long white roots, and brandished it, much as Jupiter is represented brandishing a handful of lightning. "Look at that dam-root"—he pronounced the words as one pronounces beet-root—"that some"—here a powerful variant on the usual definition of fool—"is after planting in your honour's consarns! See here! If ye left no more o' that in the ground than as much as ye couldn't see itself, it'd have the place ate up in one fortnight! I gave the morning to it, an' if I give the day itself it's hardly I'll have it all dug—Divil's cure to the—" (Here more variants in connection with the imposter.)

Something wavering in Bat's eye, even while the denunciation proceeded, made me

conscious of the smirch of suspicion. I remained silent as the grave. Secretly I visited the other colonies, and found that one of them was already swinging an enveloping wing round the rearguard of the Iris Kaempferi, and that another had flung outposts into the heart of the helianthemums. At a bound I ranged myself with the opposition.

"Bat," I said, "the Dam-roots are in the garden!"

That night a fair-sized bundle of winter heliotrope was restored to my generous neighbour. Bat threw it over the wall.

I am slowly acquiring some insight into my gardener's likes and dislikes. He despises anything that he suspects of being a wild flower.

"'Sha! that's no good! That's one of the Heth family! The hills is rotten with it."

But on the other hand, he will lavish such a wealth of attention upon potatoes as would, if bestowed on the despised daughter of Heth, cause it to blossom like the rose. There are, in his opinion, but three flowers really worthy of cultivation. Red geraniums, blue lobelias, and yellow calceolarias. With

these, had he his will, should all my garden be glorious. I never buy them ; I never see them in their earlier stages, but suddenly, in the herbaceous border, the trio will appear, uttering a note of colour only comparable to the shriek of a macaw.

"Why then, there isn't a gentleman's garden in Ireland but thim have the sway in it!" Bat says, when he finds me brooding over a shattered ideal. "There was Mr. Massy's was the grand place! The garden steps big slobs of marble, and the gate lodges dashed and haberdashed, and the gardens fit to blind yer eye by the dint o' thim!"

What "haberdashed" may mean I cannot say, but "thim" meant the combination so dear to his heart that a stouter than mine would be needed to abolish it, even from a herbaceous border.

Sometimes, chiefly on Sunday afternoons, I am visited by compunction in the matter of the prohibited "calcies" and "lobaylias," for it is on Sundays that Bat is "at home" to three favoured enemies of his own profession. They move, very slowly, and, for the most part, silently, from bed to bed, like

doctors making a clinical inspection at a hospital ; at intervals they put a horny finger under a patient's chin and gravely study his complexion, or, wishing perhaps to show generosity to a rival, they pick off some malign bug or caterpillar, and squash it between an unhesitating finger and thumb. It is at such times that I feel how far my garden in its lack of that gorgeous trio lags behind that of any other gentleman in Ireland.

But my gardener has his alleviations. There was one bright day which, having begun with the funeral of a relative, culminated in a visit as prolonged as it was satiating from the chief mourner. King Solomon did not exploit his Temple more thoroughly for the discomfiture of the Queen of Sheba than did Bat his gardens for the Chief Mourner. The latter, a "mountainy man from back in the counthry," paced heavily round after Mr. Whoolly, his hands folded on the apex of his back under the voluminous skirts of his blue frieze coat, a stick hanging from them like a tail. The deep silence of his native hills was on him ; he suffered his emotions without expression until the tour of the kitchen garden

was made, its climax — fortunately stage-managed by Bat—being "a bed of greens." There is that in such a bed that, in such a nature, touches an even more vibrating chord than potatoes.

"And cabbages!" said the mountainy man, almost in a whisper.

The Queen of Sheba herself was not a more gratifying audience. Mr. Whoolley seems to have observed the parallelism of the cases, and assuming that the visitor, in spite of the funeral, had no more spirit left in him, the couple adjourned to a convenient public house and were no more seen.

On the whole, I think I may say that I give Bat satisfaction. He is generous in judging rather by intention than achievement, and he sees the advantages of fostering a disposition to weed. Only once has he been tried too high, and that was when I planted out a bed with what he calls "pushoch-bui," a most pestilent weed whose English equivalent is, I fancy, charlock. To me he passed over the error in a very handsome manner, but I heard him the same afternoon say to the subordinate who was making good my misdoing:

"AND CABBAGES!" SAID THE MOUNTAINY MAN

"Is it that one! Sure he's no more good than a feather!"

Another act of folly of mine, however, carried with it more serious consequences. I was so far left to myself as to give permission to a Sunday School excursion of unknown dimensions to disport itself in my domains. Dates were discussed, and times arranged, and then a sponge of kindly oblivion wiped the affair from my mind. It was a couple of months afterwards—I was inspecting my wall fruit in the kitchen garden at eleven o'clock in the morning, and being eaten by midges in a way that foretold immediate rain, when there was a sound of thunderous driving on the avenue. Just then the rain began to fall, and almost at the same moment there arrived to me a rushing messenger from the house saying "there were ladies in the drawing-room."

I am a lone man, and there is no one to share with me the brunt of such a moment. I hurried in, and was confronted as I neared the hall door by four huge yellow brakes, full of children, and roofed with umbrellas. Two, already empty, were emulously pressing towards the yard, one taking a short cut across a strip of lawn, and two more were

disgorging their burdens at large. I went into the drawing-room and found it lined with ladies in black. It was explained to me that on account of the rain the party, which comprised the Patrons, Teachers, and Pupils of four Sunday Schools, had "taken the liberty of coming to the house for shelter." Even as they spoke a strange murmuring sound arose from beneath my feet—the hum as of an angry hive. The house, like many old country houses in Ireland, stands upon a basement storey, and I realised that its cavernous recesses were being utilised as a receptacle for the Amalgamated Sunday Schools.

I cannot clearly recall the varied events of that day of nightmare. I remember finding, at one juncture, one of my subordinates stemming the rush of the Sunday Schools up the back-stairs with the kitchen table and an old driving whip. At another, my honoured presence was requested in a cave-like place, once a laundry, wherein a shocking meal was being partaken of. I noticed a teacher with a "cut" of cold salmon, wrapped in newspaper. She ate it with her fingers, quaffing raspberry vinegar the while. Kettles,

capacious as the boiler of a man-of-war, steamed on the ancient fireplace; the air reeked of damp children and buns. Later on it cleared, and I led a company of female patrons forth to see the garden. Already the sward of the tennis ground looked like Epsom Downs on the day after the Derby, and an animated game of Hide-and-Seek was in progress among my young rhododendrons. I averted my eyes. In the flower garden the usual amusement of leaping the beds had taken place, with the usual results of chasm-like footprints in the centre of each. The first endurable incident of the day was the discovery that Bat had locked the kitchen garden gate, and that my strollings with the patronesses were perforce ended. But even as I was expressing my regrets (coupled, mentally, with a resolve to raise Mr. Whoolly's wages) there arose from within the walls cries of the most poignant, accompanied by roars comparable only to those of a wounded tiger. On the top of the wall, just above us there shot into view the face of a boy, a face scarlet with exertion, vociferous in lamentation. Quickly following it there appeared down the length of the wall other faces,

equally agitated, while from within came a sound as of the heavy beating of carpets. Other sounds came also. Sounds of indignation too explicit to be printable. I blushed for the patronesses. None the less I endorsed every word of it as I realised that my best peach trees were being used as ladders by the Amalgamated Sunday Schools.

I think that was about the last act in the tragedy. Not long afterwards, in a yellow glow of late, repentant sunlight, the four brakes drove—with further cuttings of grassy corners—up to the hall door. The Sunday Schools were condensed into them, each child receiving an orange as it took its seat, and thin cheers arose in my honour. Simultaneously the brakes snowed forth orange peel upon the gravel; the procession swept out of sight, still cheering, still snowing orange peel.

For reasons darkly and inextricably mixed up with the Sunday School excursion, dinner that night was served at nine o'clock, and as I was aware that every servant in the house was in a separate and towering passion, I refrained from inquiry.

Yet, even through the indigestion following

on this belated repast, I was upheld by the remembrance of Bat's face, as he glared at me through the bars of the kitchen garden gate, and said :

"Thanks be to God, I'm after breaking six pay-sticks on their backs!"

OUT OF HAND

OUT OF HAND

Soldiers were there to keep the peace. The redcoats and the bayonets moved in a rigid line through the crowd that blocked the two streets of the town. They guarded a small body of voters that had come across Lough Corrib, and was making its way to the polling-booths, headed by a Galway landlord, on whose arm leaned an old man, decrepit, and unnerved by the storm of opposition through which they passed.

Another Galway landlord was ranging through groups of men who turned their backs on him, and hid behind each other, his tenants, personal friends all of them, who, for the first time on record, had voted in opposition to his wishes.

"Every one of them!" he said, while the atmosphere that surrounds suffering and

strong emotion made itself felt, "all but two or three. They have all gone against me."

It was a memorable election, marking the new departure in Irish politics, and it broke the hearts and practically ended the lives of two at least of the Galway landlords. Till that time the landlords took their tenants to the poll *en masse;* thenceforward they were to advance under the banner of the Church.

The epoch that here found its close was memorable, too, in its way. It held, far back in it, the brave days when the Galway elections lasted for a month, and the actual voting for a week, days to which the pages of Lever bear witness. As that week of delightful warfare strove on the electors became more fastidious about their drinks, and would accept nothing less aristocratic than mulled port and claret. These restoratives were brewed in fish-kettles on the big fireplaces of the ballroom in Kilroy's hotel, an agreeable incident, not, we think, commemorated by Lever.

. . . . .

Twenty years afterwards a Galway village lay mute in the sunshine, drowsy with

respectability, assertive of rectitude in every slant of its slate roofs. To view it thus from the waste altitudes of the moor above it, on a Sunday morning of July, with the call of a cock straining up through the silence, was to endue it with all the stillness and strictness of the day itself, even to credit it with a Presbyterian rigour of Sabbaticism that was at variance with the traditions of the County Galway. Down on its own level, and approaching it through the aisle of shade that lay between broken demesne walls and under the lofty embrace of demesne trees, the glare of its whitewash closed the vista blatantly, and with a self-righteousness that suppressed the romantic as a thing of libertine irrelevance. Therefore, to an eye accustomed, during many Sundays, to the recognition of the barren street, with its strings of ducks in moody reverie about the unremunerative gutters, and its dogs asleep outside the closed doors, it was startling beyond the merit of the occasion to be confronted with a staring crowd of people that filled the street loosely from end to end. Every face was turned towards the newcomer, till the whole slope of the hill was

flushed with them; then it darkened, as the people realised that nothing worthy of further notice was occurring, and turned their heads again towards Galway.

The crowd was a representative one. Wizened old men in swallow-tailed coats and knee-breeches, degenerate youth in check suits and pot-hats, tanned women in deep-hooded cloaks, girls with shawls over their heads, freckled and ubiquitous children—all smelling heavily of turf smoke, some modernised with the master smell of hair-oil. The anti-Parnellite candidate was expected to arrive at any moment from Galway, to address those who had come to the village for Mass; and though the people had now been out of chapel for an hour there seemed to be no wish to disperse, or any sign of impatience. They even appeared to be enjoying themselves as thoroughly as was compatible with the fact that the public-houses had not yet been opened. Anything so fascinating as a little political excitement was worth waiting for, especially while Providence was liberal of fresh arrivals on outside cars, and invention failed not of the personal allusion wherewith to greet them;

so that time passed healthfully, and expectation was no more than pleasantly ripe when outposts on the hill heralded at length the approach of the candidate.

A blended roar of execration and encouragement went out to meet him—a greeting sustained on every note of the human compass in a savagely inarticulate mass of discord. He seemed to cleave his way through it as he passed, his figure moving pompously along on its car above the shoulders of the people, in black coat and white waistcoat, while a deft hand manipulated a tall hat in recognition of every crumb of welcome. He passed on down a by-road towards the chapel, followed by a few dozen people, and by the booing and hooting of the rest of the assemblage. Clearly the materials for the meeting were elsewhere.

It was not far to the chapel, four hundred yards or thereabouts of dusty road, that lay hot and quiet between loose stone walls, dropping to a hollow and rising again to the low height where stood the unmistakable building that is the heart and fountain of parish politics, its plaster and whitewash veiled a little by the kindly churchyard trees,

and the stone cross on its gable standing strong and keen under the melting sky.

On nearing the churchyard the candidate's voice was audible through the trees in fluent, opening sentences, each point duly weighted with a "Hee'rr, hee'rr!" as businesslike as the "Amen" of the parish clerk. His car was waiting outside in the shade, and the carman, who was perhaps a little *blasé* in the matter of speeches, was smoking an unemotional pipe beside it.

"Indeed, you may say the town of Galway is in a quare way," he said, putting his hand to a cheek that was just perceptibly more purple than the other. "Look at meself, the figure I am, that wasn't spakin' a word to a Christhian, good nor bad, and lasht night a fishwoman comes down to me in the sthreet this ways"—squaring his elbows and strutting —"'Hi for Lynch!' says she, hittin' me a puck in the jaw with her skib (basket). The Lord save us! 'tis hardly I ran from her before she had the town gethered afther her. Begob, the women's the most that'd frighten ye!"

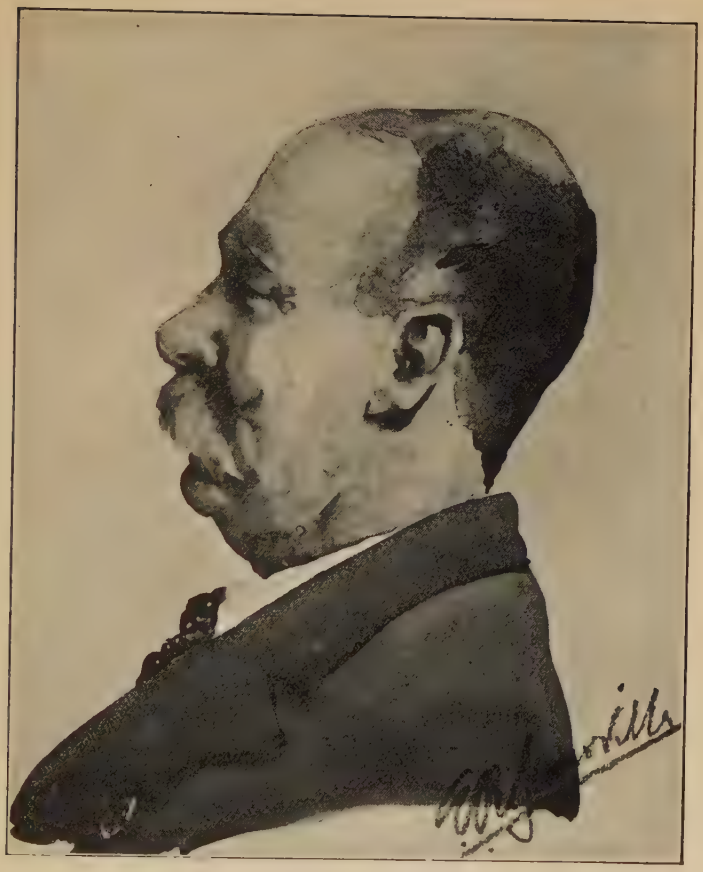
At the churchyard gate a couple of long-tailed colts were tied up, saddle-horses evidently, but bare-backed, and bridled with a

halter, their bodies bloated with summer grass out of all proportion to their long legs, and their countrified ears pricking occasionally at the cheers that did not by the blink of an eyelid affect the doze of the Galway car-horse. The company inside was a small one as compared with that in the street, and had in it a much larger proportion of women and old men, to which was perhaps due the superior calm of the proceedings. The churchyard was a spacious one, depressingly roomy indeed for the present occasion, for which any suburban back garden would have sufficed. Most of the audience had mounted on the tombstones, great slabs of limestone that formed the lids of the boxes placed over the more distinguished dead, blackish grey, and ringing under the hobnailed-boots like metal. The candidate stood on the highest tombstone, and all around him leaned and clung these strange groups of men and women, looking like the wooded islands in the lake close by ; while between them the quiet background of the graveyard was visible, with its bent and musing trees, and array of low head-stones gazing blindly at the concourse.

The bald top of the candidate's head

formed the focus-point of the gathering, giving back the sun's glare like glass as it swung and jerked with the flow of oratory, and beside it the immense shovel-hat of the old priest moved occasionally in accord, italicising for the benefit of the flock such phrases as seemed especially edifying. The curate was nowhere to be seen ; rumour said that his political theories were not formed on those of his superior. A remembrance recurred of meeting, that morning, a severely contemplative young priest, walking alone and away from the village, with the green flicker of the leaves overhead playing strangely across the gloom of his sallow face.

The candidate's speech seemed, indeed, to require a little driving home. It was, for the most part, an explanation to his constituents of the reasons that made it necessary for him to forego the happiness of acquainting himself with them in any intimate degree. He was, he said, in his temperately florid manner, closely connected with a large firm in England and, deplorable to relate, his income depended on his living in the bosom of the English firm. "Sure we know that—we know that!"



THE CANDIDATE

yelled the half-dozen most chosen supporters, crushing precariously round the candidate on the edge of the tombstone platform, with their wild, combative faces pressing, all on fire, towards him. Perhaps he might yet be roused to say the right things about the rival candidate, the things that would wring forth a cheer in reply to those distant ones that came maddeningly at intervals from the crowd in the street.

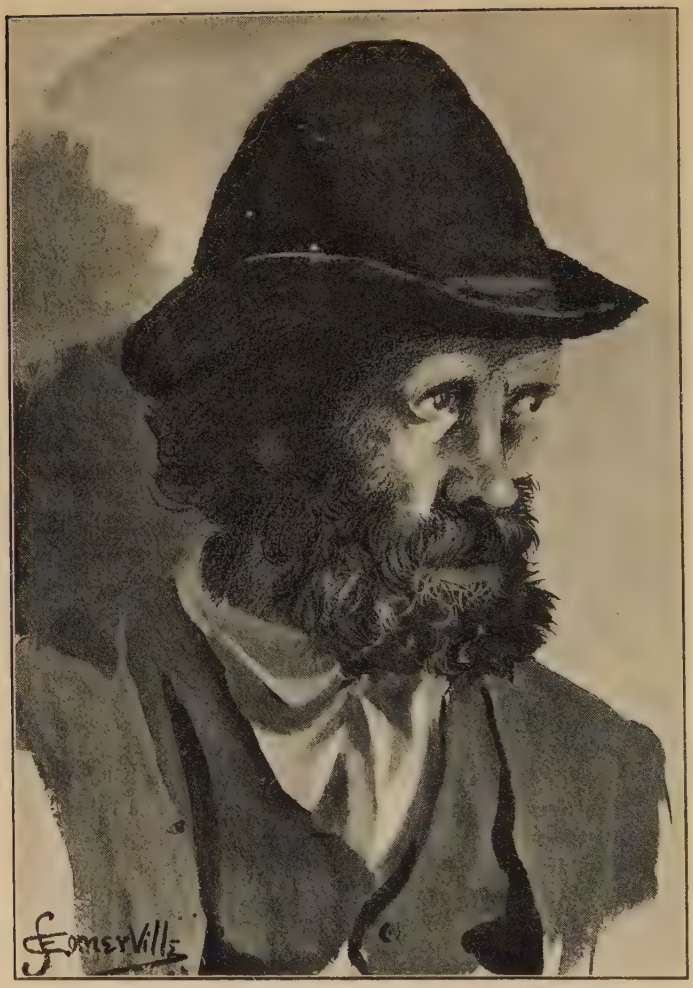
But the speaker kept his eloquence well in hand, confining himself to such blind alleys of assertion as the remarkable success of his own career, his confidence that his constituents would re-elect him, and his desire to benefit them in some immeasurable way if they did so. A permissive cynicism curved the wrinkles on the faces of the old men who stood on the grassy graves behind him, with their hands under their coat-tails, and their grizzled chins sunk in their shirt-collars; they knew how they were going to vote, and their own powers (matured in the sale of many a heifer and rood of bog) of taking a part and sustaining it, with a perfectness that would deceive the elect, made them sceptical as to the ends of speech-making. The women

were tittering and whispering under their shawls; but were certainly impressed by the candidate's Sunday attire, his well-kept grey moustache, and his affable way of saying "ladies and gentlemen" every now and then.

The speech ambled to its close, through a peroration of an uncertain conversational tone, assisted at critical points by one or other of the supporters, who would ungovernably supply the needed word out of the bursting fulness of his own repertoire. It was the sole outlet for their enthusiasm, except for the cheer that caught at the ravelled edge of the final sentence, as the candidate put on his hat and bowed himself from the tombstone.

"Be prayin' for the meetin', gerrls," said the old priest, leading the way to the vestry, with rusty skirts floating widely. The door closed on him and his protégé, the clumps on the tombstones fell apart, mingling in a laughing and talking stream towards the churchyard gate, and the prayers of the young ladies were apparently deferred to a more convenient season.

The chapel door stood open, showing the



"A MAN MUST WOTE THE WAY HIS PRIEST AND BISHOP'LL TELL HIM"

barren squareness of the interior ; a zinc tub, half-full of Holy-water, stood in the porch, with the flags all round it wet from the splash of dipping hands ; the altar gleamed gaudily at the further end ; and a tall confession-box stood solitary in the seatless expanse of floor, fraught with the inseparable mystery and suggestiveness of its kind, and holding within its curtained rails the knowledge of what things are counted for unrighteousness in that twilight place, the conscience of the Western peasant. The air inside was warm, and still laden with the smell of frieze coats and stale turf smoke ; but, except for this furnishing, the blankness was complete. Sunday and its Mass were over and done with for a week, and priest and congregation were striving factors in the carnal toils of election.

The people dispersed slowly, discussing the absorbing topic of the day, some in their native tongue, but for the most part in English, so pronounced as to be in the distance scarcely distinguishable from the liquid and guttural flow of Galway Irish.

"Sure, a man must wote the way his priest and bishop'll tell him," says a tall

supporter, with the air of a person repeating a truism.

"Well, meself'd say," says another, whose handsome eyes shone in the shadow of his soft felt hat, while his hands helped out his words with picturesque gesture, "the man I'd have a wish for to wote for him, is the man that'd rise out o' his bed in the night and give hay and oats to yer horse, and yerself fotever ye'd ax, when any one else'd leshen (listen) in their bed if ye were battherin' there till mornin'."

This argument referred to the well-known good nature of the Parnellite candidate, a general dealer and publican in a neighbouring village.

"Well, indeed, he's no scholar, I suppose," says a young fellow, still in reference to the Parnellite. "He has no learnin' nor way of spakin' no more than meself, but becripes! he's a fine sthrong man, and he'll be well able to fight and box in Parliament."

This was said in entire good faith, and was listened to with respect.

"Come on back the road!" bawls a supporter, beckoning authoritatively from the distance, "let yees come on now, the whole

o' yee, the way we'd be before the car and it going up!"

The reason for this manœuvre was presently apparent, on returning to the village street. As the candidate's car left the chapel the Parnellite crowd thronged the corner by which it must pass; a battery of threatening faces, waiting with unknown purpose; a gauntlet to run or to run away from. The car came slowly up the hill, preceded by a party of supporters; the candidate on one side, looking anxious the old priest on the other, bare-headed, and looking still more anxious, but waving his hand as if in greeting, while the interwoven yells became a thrilling mass of sound.

It was well for the candidate that his companion was one of the oldest and most popular of the Galway priests. That prestige had shielded the churchyard meeting from disturbance, and but for its influence now the future M.P. might have returned to England with an appearance not advantageous to the firm of which he was a member. A forest of clenched fists and sticks seemed to leap up towards him, the scream of hatred never took breath, and

there was entreaty in the face of the priest as his wrinkled hands waved repressively above the tumult. There was a long moment of uncertainty, but in the next the car was through in safety, and was gone in the twinkling of an eye, the supporters running in its wake till the last waving gleam of the candidate's silk hat had been garnered.

It was then that things began to look, to an Irish eye, most promising and attractive. The supporters turned, formed into a solid body of perhaps forty men and boys, and marched with inimitable swagger straight back into the crowd, all together, in a kind of chant, shouting, "To hell with——!" (the rival candidate) at the utmost strength of their lungs. The theme was a simple one, but magnificently vocalised, and was instantly replied to in the *tu quoque* manner by the opposite party. Sticks went up, the women rushed outwards for safety, looking, with their floating shawls, like a flock of frightened turkeys; and at this point the four constabulary men who represented that force made themselves felt. The dangerous moment yielded easily and unresentfully to

these judicious hands, and the excitement sputtered out in a little bragging and hustling, without so much as a black eye to commemorate it. In half an hour the ducks were again waddling in line along the empty street, and a muffled hum proceeding from the shuttered public houses, told that the *bonâ fide* travellers had at length reached their journey's end. It was a lamentable falling off from the days of the fish kettles and the mulled port of Kilroy's Hotel.

The episode had expired in the way that might have been expected, and was at best an indeterminate, shapeless thing, full of unripe revolt that it was too childish to express. But that moment when the little flame first flickers in the gorse, feeling its naked way among the thorns and affluent blossom, has a wonder of birth in it that is forgotten when the blazing hillside jars the noonday, and the smoke rolls monotonously from strongholds of conflagration.

A RECORD OF HOLIDAY

A RECORD OF HOLIDAY

Of summer holidays it may at least be contended that they involve two periods of undiluted enjoyment; the time of anticipation, and the calm—if sometimes chastened—season of retrospect.

I am glad, now that the mice are nesting in my trunks, and the spiders weaving fresh straps round my hold-all, that I have been to Switzerland, that the greasy Visitors' books of several West of Ireland hotels hold my name. Also, I remember how very cheerful it was to study a scarlet-hued Bradshaw, and to reflect that, with certain financial restrictions, the Continent of Europe lay smiling before me. (I remember also, that I lent that entertaining work to an American friend, and found the utmost difficulty in recovering it from him. It was only restored, indeed,

on the morning of my departure, and my friend mentioned that he had sat up all night reading it, "Just to see how it ended," he said.)

Between, however, these seasons of satisfaction, there stretches the actual time of holiday, and as I reflect upon it, I am struck by the fact that its more salient features are misfortunes. From a literary point of view this has its advantages; the happy traveller has no history. If the converse is true it would need Gibbon or Macaulay to deal with our transit from the County Cork to that Alpine fastness for which we had trustingly, fearlessly labelled our luggage.

It began with fog in the Channel—the Irish Channel—solid, tangible fog, through which our bewildered steamer stumbled, uttering large, desolate cries of distress, stopping every now and then to bellow like a lost cow, sometimes, even, going astern, while muffled hootings told of another wanderer who had drawn nearer than was convenient.

"When I heard 'em giving the signal to go astern," said a sailor officer of high degree, next morning, as he gobbled a belated mouthful

of breakfast, "I thought it was about time to get up and put on my clothes. Said nothing about it to m' wife, though!"

I wonder if he has realised yet why everyone smiled.

In London, rain; in Paris, blinding heat. Dizzily we staggered round the elder Salon, and through its innumerable small square rooms, with their lining of flagrant canvases; it was like exploring the brain-cells of a fever patient in delirium. One healing instant was ours, when at the public baths in the Boulevard Mont Parnasse, the waters of a "*Bain Complet*" closed over the exhausted person; but that, even, was speedily poisoned by the discovery that towels and soap, being extras, were not left in the *Cabinet de Bain*, and the bather, having with dripping hands explored the pocket for the needed coins, had then to tender them to the attendant through a difficult slit of doorway, receiving in exchange a small fragment of slightly scented marble and a gauze veil.

After that, the night journey to Geneva. Heat, sardine-like proximity of fellow travellers, two dauntless English ladies, who turned the long night into one unending and

clanking tea-party ; a nightmare interlude of *douaniers*, then, when a troubled sleep had at length been bestowed, Geneva ; and all the horrors that attend the finish of a long train journey.

At breakfast, at our hotel, a survey of what we had hitherto endured in the pursuit of pleasure stung us to a brief revolt. This was a holiday, we told ourselves, why hurry? Fortified by a principle, theoretically unassailable, we strolled about Geneva. It was cold and very wet; still, in our newly realised leisure, we made a point of strolling. On our return to our hotel most of the staff were on the pavement, seemingly very much excited. A *voiture*, laden with our luggage, stood at the door. It appeared that our steamer left for Villeneuve in eight minutes. I imagine that the hotel staff's agitation arose from the fear that we should not have time to tip them all. This was, alas, unfounded.

The driver took us first to the wrong steamer. He then turned his machine too short, and locked the fore carriage. Then he shambled across the long bridge to the other steamboat *quai*, while we sat forward, like the coxswains of racing eights, in sweating

agony, watching our boat getting up steam and preparing for instant departure.

We caught the boat by springing, like Spurius Lartius and Herminius, across the widening chasm between her deck and the shore, and therewith fell into a species of syncope. Mists shrouded the mountains; a chilled rain swept the lake. For our parts, slowly recovering, we kept the cabin, and swept the tea-table. It was almost our first moment of enjoyment.

The Alpine fastness, already alluded to, was not gained for a further couple of days, during which an awakening distaste for Switzerland slowly grew in us, though it did not thoroughly mature till mellowed by a mule ride up a mountain. Reticence in narration is a quality that I endeavour to cultivate. It becomes a necessity in treating of the village and its surrounding slums from and through which our start was made. Having, in a state nearing starvation, been offered the sole refreshment available, namely, concentrated essence of typhoid in the guise of glasses of milk, and having retained sufficient self-control to refuse them, we started on mule-back for the mountain.

Traversing, as I have every reason to believe, the open main drain of the village, our animals proceeded to totter up a narrow and precipitous watercourse.

"*La voie la plus directe*," explained the mule-driver, lashing his ancient cattle in a general way, and without animosity.

The cloud that accompanied our wanderings, as in the case of the Israelites, did not fail of its usual office. Even through the crown of a Panama straw hat the rain attained to my skin. Thence it descended, enveloping me, as it were an inner garment. Twice my mule fell down. I could not reproach it. Indeed, nothing but the fact that one of its parents had been an ass explained its readiness to pick itself up and go on again. It had, however, an incentive, supplied in the rear by its proprietor; we had naught save the fetish of Holiday to goad us onward, and its potency was beginning to weaken.

One week of the mountain hotel was as much as we were able to endure. The usual "exceptional" weather prevailed. How familiar is the formula, and how entirely unworthy of credence!

"For seventeen years"—the Landlord calls heaven to witness—"it has never been so wet, or so cold, or so stormy at this time. If Monsieur or Madame, had come but three weeks ago—or would wait but three days onger——"

There was a time when the glamour of holiday might have induced belief, might even have beguiled a further endurance of the age-long *table-d'hôte* repasts, of the aggressive muscularity of the English schoolmaster, who, during the progress of the *ménu* from the watery soup to the acrid Alpine strawberry, faced us, boasting at large and in detail; of the German bride, who practised the piano for four hours daily (her head upon her bridegroom's shoulder, his faithful arm round her waist). These things, though unattractive in themselves, might once have been submitted to as elements of the theoretical holiday (in Switzerland), as mere inevitable crumples in the rose-leaf.

But, on this occasion—it is possibly one of the compensations of advancing years—we found ourselves endowed with a juster sense of proportion. The close of the eighth day saw us heading for home with a speed that

almost amounted to rout. The mule-driver's maxim, "*la voie la plus directe*," seemed good common sense; we drew neither breath nor bridle, Geneva, Paris, London were but names in the night, till we found ourselves facing America from the front doorstep of a certain remote hostelry in the far west of Connaught.

Then, and not till then, did something of the largeness, the leisure, the absurdity, the unconventionality, that should enter into all true holiday, begin for us.

I have said hostelry, and undoubtedly the words "Seaview Hotel," in letters large and green, were inscribed upon its pink-washed walls, but without this clue I do not think the closest observer would be able to detect its walk in life. It had but one storey; a dark and narrow passage led from the entrance to the kitchen, and therein, at (as subsequent experience showed us) any time of the day or night, the entire establishment might be found, massed, talking as though they had not met for years, and were to separate in an hour.

Thus we, led by our carman, an *habitué* of the house, found them, and thus, with but

FACING AMERICA

brief intervals, they continued during the period we spent among them.

"What is it, Mike?" this to the car-driver from a very stout lady, whom we rightly assumed to be the proprietress. "Oh—the sitting-room," she exhibited a natural annoyance, having been interrupted in a pronouncement on, I gathered, the feeding of pigs. "Here! Mary Kate, show the sitting-room!" She re-addressed herself to her subject.

Mary Kate, a charming slattern with a profusion of fair hair, "showed" the sitting-room. It was small, but not unclean, and, in addition to the normal outfit of table and chairs, was remarkably equipped with a large double perambulator, whose use as a side-board was sufficiently indicated by the fact that a cruet stand and a loaf of bread occupied one seat, while a piece of cold beef reclined on the other. The bedrooms, if I may quote a French guide-book's remarks upon the retreat of a hermit, "excited I know not what emotions of religious terror;" emotions that were not allayed by the suspicion, that deepened to certainly, that, in the absence of visitors, they were occupied by the staff.

"Hot wather? O *cerr*tainly!" said Mary

Kate, kindly. "Beg your pardon—" she crushed past me to the chimney-piece, and proceeded to grope behind photograph frames and a crowded multitude of glass and china, *objets d'art.* "I left me hat pins—" here she giggled confidentially, while, so intimate was the arrangement of the *objets d'art*, that several of them fell off at the farther end of the chimney piece. "Ah! what matther! Sure they're all a little broke!" said Mary Kate, wedging them into their places again, and thrusting the recovered hat pins into her redundant locks. "Ye'll be wanting somethin' to eat now, I daresay," she went on, "I'll send granne'ma in to ye."

A brief interval ensued, during which we furtively examined the bedclothes, and indulged in disturbed conjecture as to the substance that stuffed the pillows. Their smell, though curious, offered no basis for theory.

There came a creeping sound without, and low down, a panel of the door was dealt a single blow.

I said "Come in!" not without a slight recurrence of religious terror.

A very little and ancient woman stood there, with the trade marks of soot and

grease thick upon her. When she curtseyed she seemed to merge in the door mat, so small was she and so dingy.

There was reassurance in the discovery that she seemed as much in awe of us as we of her.

"How would I know what the likes o' ye would fancy?" she said, almost with despair, and went on to hope that our visit might prove an education into the ways of the aristocracy of which she had long stood in need, but she coupled the admission with a warning that she "was very owld and very dull."

It was a high responsibility, this position of exponents of an unknown type, and it is much to be regretted that we were forced to leave our venerable disciple under the impression that the upper classes usually cook their own food at hotels. It should here be said that this expedition had not been entered upon without a certain foreknowledge of what it was likely to involve, and amongst other precautions were provisions of a portable sort. These included sausages, and the sausages we confided to our old lady.

We sat in the parlour enjoying the appetite for dinner that is one of the bright features of a genuine holiday. After a delay of about half an hour, Mary Kate's head was thrust through a narrow opening of the door.

"Granne'ma says will the little puddings be split?"

Had the answer been Yes, and that it was usual to serve them with cream and sugar, I feel sure that grandmamma would have complied. As it was, after instructions to Mary Kate, of a lucidity unrivalled by Mrs. Beeton, the sausages appeared, pale, tepid, raw, in a pie-dish, just a-wash with luke-warm water.

The holiday appetite quailed at the sight, and the *chef* was summoned from the conversazione still raging in the kitchen. A single glance at the guests told her of failure, and, with a masterly grasp of the position, she hurried back to the kitchen and returned with the frying-pan.

"Keep it now yersels," she said. "Didn't I say to ye I was too owld?"

From that time the parlour grate led a sullied life, but—which may have consoled it—a thoroughly useful one. We re-cooked the sausages upon it; the perambulator

yielded its increase, toast, grilled beef, sausages, who could reasonably ask for more?

We spent two days and two nights there; days of perfect weather, spent in exploring a coast as wild and beautiful as the heart of holiday maker could desire, nights strangely, almost desolately devoid of the entomological excursions and pursuits usual to village inns, and, in spite of the peculiarities of the pillows, sleep was not difficult. Or rather, in candour it should be said, was difficult only after the rising of the sun For with the dawn, a vagrant population was astir in the village; a street Arab community of hens, dogs, geese and donkeys, incessant and clarion-toned in their addresses to morn and to each other; creatures who slept under carts and in stray corners; who treated life as a lounge, and regarded their owners as suzerains merely, to whom occasional allegiance was to be rendered, or a tributary egg or two laid in an inaccessible place.

On the whole, the donkeys are those of whom I can speak least temperately. They had, for want, possibly, of other employment, adopted the position of town-criers to the

village, or perhaps were its prophets, perhaps its Cassandras, and they uplifted their testimony from sunrise till nightfall with a poignancy that rent the very skies. Standing one evening on one of the low hills that hemmed the village into its corner by the sea, I counted easily, and with half a glance, four of these enthusiasts, planted each on a commanding rock or mound, and sending his wild voice abroad over the valley. It was a sunny evening, after a day of sad and opalescent beauty, and the sea had brightened into blue and silver ; the white-washed gables and a far white lighthouse were radiant with recovered cheerfulness, but the jackasses were as despairful and implacable as Jeremiah.

There was but one disaster during our brief sojourn at the Sea View Hotel. A few sausages and a tin of sardines remained, "spared," as Mary Kate said, from the first repast. These she proposed to store, for safety and coolness, in one of our bedrooms. The idea not being well received, she finally deposited them in the Post Office, which was attached to the hotel. But even this hiding place was not improbable enough to hoodwink that skilled tactician, the hotel cat, and

IN WEST CARBERY

he, in some dark hour of the night, found and feasted on them with, no doubt, all the ravishing joy of a new experience.

We could not but sympathise with him. Thanks to the Sea View Hotel that subtle joy was also ours.

I began by saying that of the Summer holidays the times of anticipation and of retrospect were the times of truest pleasure. Yet I can remember long September days beside a sea of Mediterranean blue, the sea of Southern Ireland, when the perfect present asked nothing of either past or future. The long creek wound, blue-green as a peacock's breast, between deep woods. High places of rock and heather were there, where you could lie, "ringed with the azure world," and see the huge liners, yes, and hear them too, as they went throbbing and trampling along the sun's path westward.

Those who know this place of holiday are comparatively few, but there is at least one distinguished name of the company—Dean Swift, no less. A couple of hundred years or so ago, he spent a summer in West Carbery, (an ivy-covered ruin, known as Swift's Tower, testifies to the fact,) and he

forthwith made a poem about it, a Latin poem, addressed to the Rocks of Carbery.

One gathers that it was of the nature of an encomium, though the points selected for description are not those that would tempt the effete holiday maker of to-day. Possibly it was the Dean's majestic eighteenth-century manner of thanking his host for "a very pleasant visit." I came upon it in the house of a descendant of that host, reverently quoted in a copy of Dr. Smith's history of the County Cork, dated 1749. Thanks to the sympathetic scholarship of a contemporary divine, the Revd. Dr. Donkin, who made a translation of it, I am able to give some quotations from it. Dr. Smith thinks that "the Dean's descriptions are as just as his numbers are beautiful." It is not for me to disagree with him. Let them—or some of them—dignify these unworthy pages.

"Lo! From the top of yonder cliff, that shrouds
Its airy head amidst the azure clouds,
Hangs the huge fragment, destitute of props,
Prone on the waves the rocky ruin drops.

. . . . .

Oft too with hideous yawn, the cavern wide
Presents an orifice on either side;

A dismal orifice, from sea to sea
Extended, pervious to the god of day.

. . . . .

High on the cliff their nests wild pigeons make,
And sea calves stable in the oozey lake . . .
When o'er the craggy steep without controul,
Big with the blast, the raging billows roll, . . .
The neighbouring race, tho' wont to brave the shocks
Of angry seas and run along the rocks,
Now pale with terror, while the ocean foams,
Fly far and wide, nor trust their native homes.
The goats, while pendant from the mountain top,
The wither'd herb improvident they crop,
Wash'd down the precipice with sudden sweep,
Leave their sweet lives beneath th' unfathomed deep."

I am sorry to say that in these degenerate times the improvident goat has lost his ancient skill and is no longer pendant, and the oozey lake and stabling sea calf (the latter possibly a lingering survivor of the Deluge) may no more be found. None the less, I can confidently commend the scenes of these catastrophes to the holiday maker of to-day.

Even now, when the sunshine of last September has faded to a memory, and that of next September is too far away to be even a hope, I can still feel the soft lift of the western wind, still hear the booming of the waves in the deep and riven heart of the cliff.

LOST, STOLEN, OR STRAYED

LOST, STOLEN, OR STRAYED

"I COULDN'T find your apron, Ma'am," said the "Why not," imported a month before, with bare feet and a forelock like a Shetland pony. She belonged to the drift-weed of the household, and would, perhaps, now be ranked as a "tweeny"; her class derived its title from its genial habit of replying "Why not?" to any given order, without considering or knowing whether such were its business. The "Why not" was at present flushed with long search, and with that sub-resentment and assumption of being suspected that all servants run up like a flag when valuables are missing.

"There isn't one in the house, but I'm afther axing about it. It must be it was waylaid."

It may scarcely be necessary to explain

that she meant mislaid, but in her limited skill in English she had expressed the real trend of the things in the establishment. They were not, as a rule, lost, nor in the strict sense of the word were they stolen ; they were waylaid, snatched from their own walk of life and applied to some pressing necessity of the moment. The apron might have been taken to clean a bicycle, or to stay the flow of spilt ink, or to bandage the foal's leg, and the "Why not" probably had been a party to its fate.

It is on record that in past ages a punt, used by the master for his own pleasure, was waylaid after it had been suitably laid up in the coach-house for the winter. When Spring came, and the time of the singing of birds and the painting of boats set in, the punt was not.

It was "gone this long time ;" it was "as rotten as that the boards was falling out of it undher the people's feet." "You couldn't tell what thim women in the laundhry would catch hold of when they'd be short of fire, an' God knows a person's heart would be broke that'd have to be lookin' for sticks for them."

Having arrived at the fact that his boat had been burned, the Master yielded to the inevitable.

"Begad!" he said, regarding the culprits through his spectacles, "I believe you'd burn myself if I'd light!"

The march of education has merely added scope to the art of waylaying. We have in the West of Ireland "heavy showers and showers in between," as an old woman put it when describing a wet day. In the course of one of the in-betweens a party from the Big House took refuge in a wayside cabin, and although it is not desirable or polite to observe too curiously the environment in wayside cabins, a glimpse of a green morocco-bound volume on a shelf, between a salt-herring and a hair-brush was too much for the visitor's good breeding. Averting our eyes from the hair-brush we identified the volume as a copy of Byron's "Marino Faliero," which had long since disappeared from the drawing-room book-case in which it had been wont to stand in the decorous neglect which, I imagine, is not uncommonly its portion.

No one knew anything about the book. It had apparently flown like a storm-beaten

bird to the cabin door, and, out of pure compassion, was given house room. From internal evidence it would seem to have inspired considerable interest in a family of the name of Sweeny, whose autographs profusely adorned its wide margins. Later on we heard that one, Patsey Sweeny, when dying, had asked for the solace of a book. The Big House had been applied to for something suitable. We shall never know what influenced the "Why not" in her selection of "Marino Faliero;" we shall never know anything in that, or in any similar matter, with any certainty, but we do not expect certainty in the West of Ireland. "Marino Faliero" returned to its fellows, importing a rich odour of tobacco and turf smoke, but otherwise, unfortunately, dumb to its adventures.

Subsequently a daughter of the house of Sweeny showed much aptitude in the art of waylaying. A Confirmation was in prospect at the chapel, at which Miss Julia Sweeny, aged eleven, was to be presented as a candidate, the occasion requiring that she should be dressed in purest white from her oily curls to her nimble and naked feet.

PATSEY SWEENY

MRS. SWEENY

When the day of transformation arrived, the Young Ladies from the Big House turned out to view it, and as the candidate knelt in angelic decorum in the chapel, the youngest of the Young Ladies made the gratifying discovery that her new white canvas tennis shoes were on the feet of Miss Sweeny. On such a day it would have been a gross want of taste to have mentioned the matter, and that evening the tennis shoes re-appeared unostentatiously in their owner's room. No comment was made on either side, but with the sensitive perception of the clinical thermometer, the Sweeny family remained invisible for several weeks, after which Mrs. Sweeny arrived with a score of eggs as a present for the youngest Young Lady, and both sides felt that a disagreeable estrangement had been handsomely closed.

The adventures of the Gravy Spoon were of the simpler household variety, inexplicable, disconnected, yet following in a certain order a track familiar to all Irish householders. The gravy spoon was antique, slender of curve, and delicately ornamented along its graceful handle. Every servant connected with the spoon will now testify that the

handle was cracked from the day it was made. One even asserts that "When ye'd strike it agin anything there'd be a roaring in it," which, of course, leaves no more to be said. That its prolonged absence from the table should have been unnoticed was well in the character of things: several months, in fact, passed before the lady of the house observed the cook skimming cream with a singular and dwarfish weapon, which proved to be the bowl and one inch of the handle of the gravy spoon. The explanation opened with the formula, "Sure that was broke always," followed almost inevitably by the statement that "it was broke when the young gentlemen was home." From the mouth of a third witness came the information that "Master Lionel broke it one day at luncheon helping curry." History was silent as to the composition of this remarkable curry. The cook entered no protest. Memory was not at any time her strongest point, judging at least from her own guileless confession on one of the many occasions when dinner was very late.

"Sure I mislaid the pudding, and there I was hunting the house for it, and where would it be afther all but in the oven!"

The search for the keys was, of course, a mere commonplace of every day. The store-room was carefully locked up, and the bunch, an enormous and for the most part obsolete collection, was then taken severely upstairs and secreted. The next event was, usually, the departure beyond ken or call of the person who had secreted the keys, followed, at a greater or less interval, by the crisis when they became essential to the progress of things, by the opening scenes of the hunt, and its gradual broadening to full cry throughout the house. During this part of the comedy the servants, who were perfectly acquainted with every known hiding-place, remained coldly intent on their business, and the hunters deferred as long as possible the humiliating moment when their co-operation must be invited. When it came, the keys came with it.

To the lost and strayed the ashpit in the yard occasionally offered harbourage, where, among the hot turf ashes and evil smells, oblivion came quickly. Sometimes, when search ran high, as lately in the case of three errant postal orders, the ashpit was placed under martial law, and yielded strange spoils

to its inquisitors. Instead of the postal orders came forth in the first instance a letter, dated 1805, from an historical personage, once Chief Justice of Ireland. The letter itself, in remarkably good preservation, described in choice and flowing English a fortnight spent in Bath, an experience in remarkable contrast to the ashpit. The second trophy was a cheque for eight pounds, recent and uncashed. The third was a tea cosy, of old gold and peacock blue satin, somewhat scorched by turf ashes, but new, and preserving in its quilted interior the label with which it emerged from its parent bazaar. There was other booty of an inconsiderable sort, but the postal orders were not found. The net result of the investigation was that every servant in the house hovered on the verge of giving warning, till the day when the postal orders arrived as stowaways in a letter from South Africa. The writer made no mention of their presence in the envelope, nor has he since been able to account for it, nor, to this hour, has any reasonable theory been brought forward to explain their wanderings.

Lest any hasty judgment should here be

formed as to the conduct of Irish households, it is well to mention that other households, not Irish, have had experiences as remarkable.

A family of my acquaintance, blameless in domestic life and even notable in virtue, has established what must be, I think, a singular renown at Scotland Yard in the matter of lost valuables. During a stay of two nights under that hospitable roof, three several and severe disasters passed like winds through the establishment, causing much mental and physical stress, and a vast amount of cab hire.

The first was the loss of a diamond star, to recover which Scotland Yard, much concerned, put forth detectives and established a network of theories. It was subsequently found under the owner's bed. The second was less showy but more acute, a purse lost while shopping. Scotland Yard (not perhaps without a memory of the diamond star) was guarded, but still sympathetic. Several purses had been brought in; would the owner describe hers? The owner now asks us to believe that on being confronted with this question she found herself unable to

remember what her purse was like. Then perhaps she could mention the sum of money it contained? Lamentable to relate, on this point also memory was a blank. After so flagrant a breakdown the ordinary individual would have ended the interview in the lock-up, but the claimant of the purse, in addition to being young and lovely, was by no means ordinary. As a matter of fact she was invited to try again, and this time was enabled to say that she believed the purse had a hole in it. Further details of the interview were withheld, but we were given to understand that though the purse was not restored, the excellent relations with the officials remained unimpaired.

The third catastrophe was the loss of a dressing-bag, containing much of value, and forgotten, in the customary way, in a cab. This was a trifling matter; a mere occasion for a morning call at Scotland Yard, where the officials, with the special and protective smile reserved for this family, produced the bag. It was taken airily home in a hansom, its recovery was announced to an admiring luncheon table, and the peculiar success of the family with Scotland Yard was discussed.

"But where is the bag?"

And even with the words came the grey dawn of the discovery that the bag had once more been left in the hansom.

To follow the subsequent events would be an unkindness. It is enough to indicate that even Scotland Yard and its special smile were on this occasion of no avail.

To lose things by accident is, as we all know, calamitously easy, to lose them designedly is not only difficult but takes nerve and, at the right moment, want of principle.

There was once a red silk parasol, of the genus known to the trade as an *en tout cas*, which, literally translated, meant that in sunny weather it was cumbrous and heavy, and that during showers it wept tears of indelible maroon upon its possessor. It passed through an unloved youth into an abhorred middle age, with a crooked nose, a swelled handle, and a mottled complexion, unfit for society, yet not sufficiently decayed for a jumble sale. I and another went to Dublin for a week, and on starting found that the red umbrella had been put on the car by the servants, who held it in high esteem. We did not give it a thought; it would, of

course, return upon the car to its lair in the back hall. As the train moved out into sunlight the red umbrella revealed itself, looming upon us through the netting where a careful porter had placed it. Not as yet recognising the hand of Fate, we lightly regarded it, and determining that it should be left in the train, straightway forgot its existence until an equally attentive porter placed it respectfully in our cab in Dublin. Had we kept our heads we should have offered it to him, murmuring something about having no change. Like most inspirations, this, unfortunately, did not occur to us till some five minutes later, but it suggested the idea of giving it to a housemaid, and on this understanding it accompanied us to our destination. During a week it disgraced our host's umbrella stand, and during that week we discovered that the housemaid, who, from the first, was quelling, was a Plymouth Sister, and would probably have regarded such a gift as an attempt to sap her religious convictions. When, on departure, it was deliberately forgotten, it was the Plymouth Sister who snatched it from the umbrella stand and breathlessly hurled it into our cab.

It was obvious that to throw it out of the window in streets crowded with traffic would merely have involved a heavy fee to an inevitable rescuer ; we reserved it for the window of the train, confidently, even enjoyably. Yet, such was its inveteracy, in the train the spell of forgetfulness again held us. The moments when it was remembered were precisely when the train stopped at stations, or the windows were blocked with fellow passengers, who would probably have pulled the communication cord to retrieve it. As we neared the long bridge of Athlone a final resolve was made. The network of big girders glided by, the broad Shannon glittered far below. The red umbrella shot like a spear through the girders and dropped out of sight. "So flashed and fell the brand Excalibur—"

The train crept into Athlone Station and there entered upon a prolonged wait among roomy and silent platforms. We exulted at leisure over the red umbrella. A hurrying foot was distantly heard ; doors opened and shut in rapid succession down the length of the train. We disinterred our tickets. The door of our carriage was opened and a heated boy put in his face.

"Did anny one here lose a red umbrella?"

It was the supreme moment in a duel with Destiny.

I replied to his question with a firm and simple negative.

CHILDREN OF THE CAPTIVITY

CHILDREN OF THE CAPTIVITY

THE road to Connemara lies white across the memory, white and very quiet. In that far west of Galway, the silence dwells pure upon the spacious country, away to where the Twelve Pins make a gallant line against the northern sky. It comes in the heathery wind, it borrows peace from the white cottage gables on the hill side, it is accented by the creeping approach of a turf cart, rocking behind its thin grey pony. Little else stirs, save the ducks that sail on a wayside pool to the push of their yellow propellers; away from the road, on a narrow oasis of arable soil, a couple of women are digging potatoes; their persistent voices are borne on the breeze that blows warm over the blossoming boglands and pink heather.

Scarcely to be analysed is that fragrance of

Irish air; the pureness of bleak mountains is in it, the twang of turf smoke is in it, and there is something more, inseparable from Ireland's green and grey landscapes, wrought in with her bowed and patient cottages, her ragged walls, and eager rivers, and intelligible only to the spirit.

Over in England there are clustered cottages half buried in rich meadows, covered with roses to the edge of their mellow roof tiles, shaded by venerable and venerated trees, pleasant resting-places for the memory. From one of them comes forth a mild-faced elderly woman in a mushroom hat, the embodiment of respectability and hard work. If you talk to her you will be impressed by her sincerity, her reticence, her reverence for cleanliness, and further, as the conversation progresses, by her total lack of humour, and her conscientious recital of details not essential to the story. You will admire and like her, and she will bore you; so will her husband, with the serious face and sober blue eyes, and you will be ashamed of being bored.

Approach one of these lonely cottages on a Connemara road, and you will find it

IN A LONELY COTTAGE

crooked without quaintness, clumsy, dirty, distressful; yet there will come forth to you round the manure-heaps in front of the door a human being, probably barefooted, and better skilled in Irish than in English, who will converse with you in the true sense of the word, that is to say, with give and take, with intuition, and with easy and instant sense of humour. While you talk to her you can observe two elderly women in red petticoats and black cloaks advancing on the long road from Galway, carrying heavy baskets from the market: their eyes are quick, their faces clearly cut and foreign-looking. Were it in your power to listen to what they are saying, you would be entertained as you have seldom been, by highly seasoned gossip, narrative, both humorous and tragic, and wide and exhaustive criticism. A cart lumbers by, loaded with men and women, their teeth, one would say, loosened in their heads by the clattering and jolting, but their flow of ideas and language unshaken. The two women in the cloaks have arrived at a juncture at which they must stand still in the ecstasy of the story; the narrator shoots out a spike of a thumb, and digs her auditor in

the chest to barb the point of the jest as it is delivered. The recipient swings backward from the waist with a yell of appreciation, they hitch their cloaks on their shoulders, and enter on the Committee stage of the affair as they move on again.

One might safely say that this bare and still country carries an amount of good talk, nimble, trenchant, and humorous, to the square mile, that the fat and comfortable plains of England could never rival. It has been so for centuries, and all the while the sons and daughters of Connemara have remained aloof and self-centred, hardly even aware of the marching life of England, least of all aware that Ireland holds the post of England's Court Jester. Others of their countrymen, more sophisticated, more astute, probably less agreeable, have not been slow to realise it. Perhaps they would have refused the Cap and Bells had they known the privilege entailed.

"As for our harps," said the Children of the Captivity, "we hanged them up upon the trees that are therein." That was when the songs of Zion were required of them in the strange land, and the strong Euphrates

saw their tears. The sympathy of all the centuries has been theirs for that poignant hour; yet, as far as can be known, they were spared an extremer pang. It is nowhere recorded that the people of the strange land made any attempt to sing the songs of Zion to the Children of Israel.

When the Children of Erin hang up their harps in the Babylon of to-day, the last thing they wish to emulate is that passionate silence of the Israelites. They hang them up as those do who enter in and possess the land, and the songs of Zion have not faltered on their lips. A captive race they may be, but their national desire to "take the floor" has remained unshaken. They have discovered that an Irish brogue has a market value, and the songs of Zion have gone through many editions and held many audiences, since the days when Tom Moore exploited his country in London drawing-rooms. The moment of bitterness is when the English become fired with the notion of singing them for themselves.

Perhaps it comes about from English love of a theory, especially an hereditary theory, that has been handed down to them, well-

thumbed by preceding generations. They have established a theory for the Irish, and particularly and confidently for Irish humour, and from owning the theory there is but a step to becoming proprietors also of the humour. Myself, when young, was nourished upon a work named "Near Home," and in the edition current at the time, I remember that the Irish were indulgently described as "a merry people, and fond of pigs." The hereditary theory could hardly have been better summarised. The average Englishman owns an Irish story or two, and is genially certain of his ability to tell it, with all necessary embellishment of accent and expression. As often as possible he tells it to an Irishman.

Elusive as running water is the brogue of the Irish peasant; hardly attained even by those who have known its tune from childhood. They, at least, know how it ought to be, and with this knowledge in their hearts, they have to sit in dreary submission while the stage Irishman convulses the English audience; they must smile, however galvanically, when friends, otherwise irreproachable, regale them with the

Irish story in all its stale exuberance of Pat and the Pig, or expound for their benefit that epitome of *vieux jeu*, the Saxon conception of an Irish Bull.

As to Irish Bulls, it could be explained, were it of any avail, that they convey a finer shade of meaning than the downright English language will otherwise admit of.

"If ye were to be killed crossing a fence ye'd be all right!" said a looker-on to one whose horse had turned head over heels in the middle of a level pasture, "but if ye were killed on the flat o' the field ye'd never hold up your head again!"

Here was the effort of the true impressionist to create an effect regardless of the means.

"Jerry was a grand man. When he'd be idle itself he'd be busy!"

Had the author of this commendation merely said that Jerry's industry was unceasing, he would have been unassailable as to diction, but he would have left his audience cold. It is a melancholy fact that the English mind contrives to miss the artist's intention, and fastens unalterably on the obvious contradiction of terms.

As in converse, so, and with deeper disaster, is it in literature. There is scarcely a week in the life of the English comic papers that is guiltless of some heavy-handed caricature of Irish humour, daubed with false idiom and preposterous spelling, secure in its consciousness of being conventional. It is better to accuse a man of having broken a commandment than to tell him that his sense of humour appears to you defective, so, leaving that branch of the subject open, I will only mention that there are alive many excellent people who will never, on this side of the grave, be convinced that the Irish peasant does not say "indade" for "indeed," "belave" for "believe," or "swape" for "sweep." Inborn and ingrained knowledge of such points is essential; if, among many anomalies, a rule can be found, it seems to be that in an Irish brogue the diphthong "ea" changes to "a," as in "say" for "sea," while the double e remains untampered with; thus you might hear a person say "I was very wake last week."

Writers of fiction have done much that is painful in dealing with Irish people. Thackeray's Captain Costigan spoke like a

stage edition of a Dublin car-driver, which is not what one would expect in a gentleman who, according to his own account, "bore his Majesty's Commission in the foighting Hundtherd and Third," and his introduction of Arthur Pendennis as "a person of refoined moind, emiable manners, and a sinsare lover of poethry" is not convincing or even very amusing. It is strange that the error of making Irish ladies and gentlemen talk like their servants should to this hour have a fascination for novelists. It is not so very long since that, in a magazine, I read of a high-born Irish Captain of Hussars, who, in a moment of emotion, exclaimed: "Howly Mither av Hiven!"

Dealing with present day writers is treading on delicate ground, and it is with diffidence that one arraigns one of the most enthralling of living story-tellers. Few of his works have been more popular than "Soldiers Three," yet to me and others of my country, it is the narratives of Private Mulvany that give least pleasure. "Gurl" for girl, "Thimber" for timber, and "Quane" for Queen, are conventions that have unfortunately proved irresistible; they are

taken from a random page or two, and there is no page free of such.

But, after all, right or wrong, pronunciation and spelling are small things in the presentment of any dialect. The vitalising power is in the rhythm of the sentence, the turn of phrase, the knowledge of idiom, and of, beyond all, the attitude of mind. A laborious system of spelling exasperates the reader, jades the eye, and fails to convince the ear. If, in illustration, I again quote Mr. Kipling, it is because of the conspicuousness of his figure in literature; he can afford to occupy the position of target, indifferent alike to miss or bull's-eye.

Stripped of its curious and stifling superfluities of spelling, a sentence of Mulvaney's runs thus :

"Oh, boys, they were more lovely than the like of any loveliness in heaven ; ay, their little bare feet were better than the white hands of a Lord's lady, and their mouths were like puckered roses, and their eyes were bigger and darker than the eyes of any living women I've seen."

With the exception of "the like" there is nothing in the wording of this panegyric

CHILDREN OF THE CAPTIVITY

that would even suggest it had been uttered by an Irishman. To stud the page with "ut" and "av" instead of "it" and "of" is of no avail. Irish people do not say these things; there is a sound that is a half-tone between the two, not to be captured by English voices, still less by English vowels. The shortcoming is, of course, trivial to those who do not suffer because of it, but want of perception of word and phrase and turn of thought means more than mere artistic failure, it means want of knowledge of the wayward and shrewd and sensitive minds that are at the back of the dialect.

The very wind that blows softly over brown acres of bog carries perfumes and sounds that England does not know: the women digging the potato-land are talking of things that England does not understand. The question that remains is whether England will ever understand.

SLIPPER'S A B C OF FOX-HUNTING

"**A** is for **A**lphabet.
Faith ! I'm in dhread
It's hardly I'll battle it out up to **Z**."

"**B** is for **B**uck.
Your best howlt is the spurs,
And make sure they're dhruv home
When ye're goin' through furze."

"**C** is for **C**heck.
If ye go any faster
Ye'll be apt to be dhrawn into chat,
With the Master."

"**D** was the **D**hrain that the fox got inside in,
Bad luck to the cowardly shkamer for hidin' ! "

"**E** came from **E**ngland, and wanted no guide.
Now he's larning the lie o' the bogs,
From inside!"

"**F** is **F**ull **C**ry.
And it's hard to say which
This lad or the hounds
Lets the powerfullest screech!"

"**G** stands for **G**eese.
Look at Gollagher now,
And himself in the thick of a Family Row!"

"**H** is for **H**orn.
The few that can blow it
Are born to the thrick,
Just the same as a poet!"

"I is meself.
No great shakes, as you see,
But there's more than one gerr'l
Is wishin' for me!"

"**J** is **J**og **H**ome.
A dhry misht from the say
Very often comes on,
Just to soften the way!'

" **K** is the **K**ick that killed Kinahane dead.
I'd be sorry to mention
The words that he said ! "

"**M** is the **M**aster,
Blaspheemious ot habit;
If you would catch hardship
Cheer hounds to a rabbit!

"And **L** is the **L**ep
That he threw in the passion.
Be cripes! But thim dogs
Got their 'nough of a thrashin'!"

" **N** was a **N**anny-goat up on the hill.
Faith ! Some o' thim puppies
Is hunting her still ! "

"**O**'s the **O**bstackle
Tim met in the way.
But the mare being free
He got no great delay."

" **P** was the **P**rice of a nate little hin
That the foxes ate over and over again.
And bedad ! if it comes to a **Q**uarrel,
(that's **Q**)
I'll back Biddy Burke
To out-hucksther a Jew ! "

"**R** is for **R**iver.
Young Reilly kept cool.
If ye give him fair warning
Young Reilly's no fool.

"And **S** was the **S**axon
That gave him the warning.
I'm thinkin' he'll hardly be dhry
Before morning."

"**T** is a Tenant
About to vacate
The site once well filled by his
Family Sate.

"And **U**'s the **U**mbrella
That spilt the poor fella.
What call have owld women
To want an Umbrella?"

"**V**'s the **V**et.
A nate surgeon, he'll 'knife it and chance it'!
And he'll 'cut out the work'
Without using his lancet!"

"Here's the **W**recker, and Earth Stopper,
Bowld Willy Roche.
Sure they say a fried egg's the one thing
He can't poach!"

"I sthruggled this long time
And couldn't find one
Dacent, sportsmanlike word
That thim letters begun.

"But at all events **X** is the finish
of Fox.
His **Y Z** ye can't see
He's to ground in the rocks!"

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